

# Indian River School District



October 2021 Newsletter

## Gillespie Named IRSD Support Professional of the Year

Gwendolyn Gillespie of Georgetown Elementary School has been named IRSD Educational Support Professional of the Year for 2021-2022.

Gwendolyn is a paraprofessional that works with special needs students in Georgetown Elementary's Intensive Learning Center (ILC). She is described by colleagues as an exceptional team player whose support has helped numerous students make tremendous gains both academically and socially. She has been praised for the compassion, patience and dedication she exhibits in her work with students and staff.

"The many students that I'm involved with in the elementary setting are priceless," Gwendolyn stated. "To know that I'm a part of their learning is beyond words. My philosophy is, and always will be, we as educators have been chosen to make a difference in every student's life. We must meet the needs of every student who is under our care for the seven and a half hours we are all together during that day."



Gwendolyn Gillespie (center) with Georgetown Elementary School Assistant Principals Jennifer Orlen (left) and Beth Illian.

The State of Delaware launched this recognition program in 2020 to recognize the exemplary efforts of school employees in a support position. Gwendolyn was chosen as the Indian River School District's overall winner from a pool of 16 candidates,

one from each school and the district office. She will now compete for the 2022 Delaware State Educational Support Professional of the Year.

**Photos of school winners,  
Page 3**

## SDSA Earns National Blue Ribbon Honor

Southern Delaware School of the Arts in Selbyville was one of three schools in Delaware and 325 nationwide to be named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2021.

Overall, it is the Indian River School District's 11<sup>th</sup> National Blue Ribbon Award since 2001.

"Being recognized as a Blue Ribbon school is quite an honor for our SDSA family. This award is the result of the dedication of our students and staff to ensure that arts enhances the lives of

our entire school community," said SDSA Principal Travis Bower. "SDSA has always pushed our students to reach new heights and to find a passion of learning through the arts. We want to thank everyone for their hard work and to those who have contributed to the success of our school over the last 23 years. Without your efforts, this achievement would not have been possible."

"I am extremely proud of the students and staff of the Southern Delaware

School of the Arts," IRSD Superintendent Jay Owens said. "The distinction of being named a National Blue Ribbon School is a high honor and a testament to the hard work and dedication of the SDSA students, staff and community."

The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of educators, families and communities in creating safe and welcoming

*Continued on Page 5*



## Indian River School District

"A Model of Excellence"

31 Hosier St.  
Selbyville, DE 19975  
(302) 436-1000  
irsd.net

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## From the Superintendent



### Dear Parents,

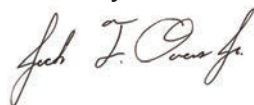
It's been an exciting fall in the Indian River School District. In September, we welcomed all students back for five days a week of in-person learning. I know that for many families this was a welcome change after more than a year of hybrid and/or full-time remote instruction. In my visits to schools it's been wonderful to see classrooms and hallways once again filled with children. As always, we sincerely appreciate your patience and understanding during these challenging times.

We received some great news in late-September when Southern Delaware School of the Arts was named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2021. My heartfelt congratulations go to Principal Travis Bower and his entire staff on this prestigious honor. This type of achievement is never the work of just a few people, but rather an entire group of individuals who strive every day to do what is best for students. I commend SDSA for upholding the Indian River School District's standard of excellence!

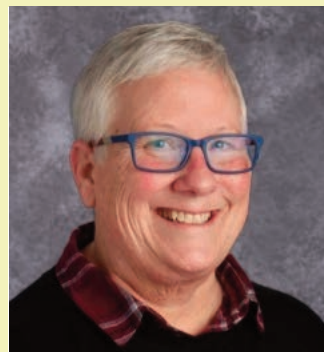
I want to congratulate Gwen Gillespie of Georgetown Elementary School for being named IRSD Educational Support Professional of Year. As an ILC paraprofessional at Georgetown Elementary School, she makes it her mission every day to make a difference in the lives of students. It is caring educators like Gwen that allow our schools to have a positive impact on children both in and out of the classroom. Photos of Gwen and all of the school winners can be found on Page 3.

This newsletter also contains exciting information about the new Howard. T. Ennis School and Sussex Central High School construction projects. Also, please note that IRSD Special Education Week is October 25-29. See Page 4 for photos of this year's Special Education Ambassadors. Have a great school year!

Sincerely,



Dr. Jay F. Owens  
Superintendent



## Did You Know?

Howard T. Ennis School teacher **Corinne Elliott** was the guest speaker at the Delaware School for the Deaf graduation ceremony on June 10, 2021. Corinne spoke in honor of **Roberto Cuenca-Maldonado**, a former IRSD student who was Valedictorian of the DSD graduating class. Roberto earned a full scholarship to Gallaudet University, where he will major in psychology with the goal of becoming a counselor or therapist.

# Partnerships Help Beautify PCS Grounds

The grounds of Phillip C. Showell Elementary School in Selbyville are undergoing a transformation this fall thanks to a pair of community partnerships.

PCS has partnered with Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids and Coastal Gardeners to build a new school garden with raised beds. All students in Grades K-5 will plant seeds and maintain the garden throughout the school year.

In early-September, volunteers from HFHK, Coastal Gardeners, Inland Bays Garden Center and Delaware Botanic Gardens built the beds and a maintenance shed at the school. Soil was provided by Millville Organic Center.

Students began planting their new school garden during the week of Sept. 20.

In addition, PCS was selected in July as a Lowe's 100 Hometowns project and received \$100,000 for new equipment for its playground. The school was nominated by a member of its PTO organization and was one of just 100 impact projects nationwide to be selected from a pool of more than 2,200 submissions.

"We are extremely thankful to be the recipient of a



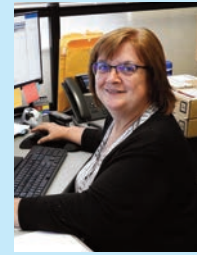
## IRSD Educational Support Professionals of the Year



**Gwendolyn Gillespie**  
*Overall Winner*  
Georgetown Elementary School



**Lynn Baker**  
Long Neck Elementary School



**Sylvia Baker**  
IRSD District Office



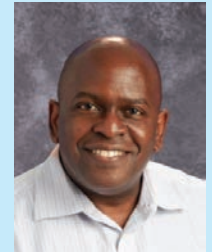
**Ashley Bennett**  
Lord Baltimore Elementary School



**Jamaal Bivens**  
Indian River High School



**Eddie Bowen**  
Millsboro Middle School



**Lenny Brittingham**  
Georgetown Middle School



*PCS students begin planting the school's new garden on Sept. 20.*

Lowe's 100 Hometowns grant," PCS Principal Christy Kerr said. "This funding will allow us to create an updated, safe and fun play space for the students at Phillip C. Showell as well as our local community. We are excited to work with Lowe's on this amazing project!"

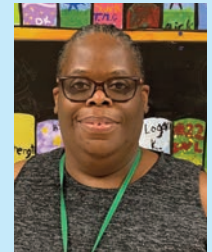
Demolition of the existing equipment began in September and work on the new playground began the week of Oct. 11. The project is scheduled for completion on or about Nov. 1.



**Chris Budesheim**  
Howard T. Ennis School



**Esque Hodge**  
Southern Delaware School of the Arts



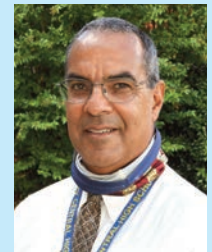
**Amy Johnson**  
Selbyville Middle School



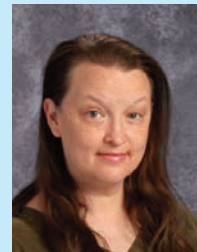
**Colette Press-Spady**  
East Millsboro Elementary School



**Cassie Queen**  
John M. Clayton Elementary School



**Randy Ramirez**  
Sussex Central High School



**Tara Richards**  
Phillip C. Showell Elementary School



**Maria Rodriguez**  
North Georgetown Elementary School



**Dan Shively**  
IRSD Early Learning Center



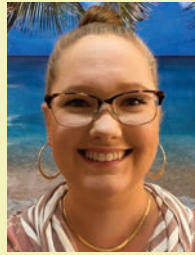
Molly Abbott



Lynn Baker



Daren Criswell



Jillian Dzurnak



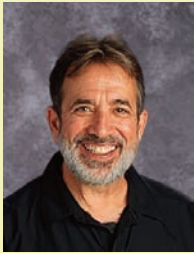
Corinne Elliott



Patricia Emmett

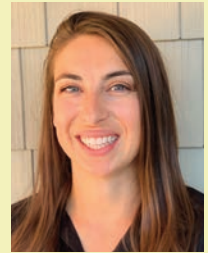
## Special Education Ambassadors 2021

The Indian River School District is pleased to announce its Special Education Ambassadors for 2021! The honorees are as follows:



Richard Franco

**Molly Abbott**, John M. Clayton Elementary School  
**Lynn Baker**, Long Neck Elementary School  
**Daren Criswell**, Indian River High School  
**Jillian Dzurnak**, Lord Baltimore Elementary School  
**Corinne Elliott**, Howard T. Ennis School  
**Patricia Emmett**, Selbyville Middle School  
**Richard Franco**, Southern Delaware School of the Arts  
**Justine Hartshorne**, IRSD Early Learning Center  
**Dan Jones**, Georgetown Elementary School  
**Joshua Lee**, Millsboro Middle School  
**Amy Mooney**, Sussex Central High School  
**Kevin Reid**, Phillip C. Showell Elementary School  
**Mark Throm**, Georgetown Middle School  
**Chelsey Wharton**, North Georgetown Elementary School  
**Jessica Yanez**, East Millsboro Elementary School



Justine Hartshorne



Dan Jones



Joshua Lee



Amy Mooney



Kevin Reid



Mark Throm



Chelsey Wharton



Jessica Yanez

**Special Education Week in the Indian River School District is October 25-29!**

## SCHS Receives World Language Honor

Sussex Central High School has been named a Delaware World Language Proficiency Champion School.

SCHS world language teachers Renata Turcan, Robert Wilgus, Cristal Wright, Gilberto Huerta, Francisco Reyes Matuz, Linda Hooks and Deziree Gardner successfully completed their Proficiency

Champion training through online modules with Avant Advance that deepened their understanding of what it means to be proficient in another language.

The modules focused on identifying key patterns of proficiency in student work and assigning different levels of proficiency to each written sample. Upon the completion of the modules

and a final certification assessment, each teacher received 15 clock hours and a certificate recognizing them as a "Delaware Proficiency Champion."

During the Delaware World Language Teacher Leader Network meeting in October, the teachers will receive a special banner to display in the hallway at SCHS.

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and

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# District "Tops Off" New Howard T. Ennis School



The Indian River School District hosted a "Topping Off" ceremony at the new Howard T. Ennis School construction site on Oct. 13. District and state officials celebrated the completion of the frame of the new school by signing the last steel beam before it was put into place in the structure of the new building. Above, members of the Howard T. Ennis School staff pose next to the beam, which contained a written tribute to former HTE Principal Kristina Perfetti.

## SCHS Schematic Drawings Approved



The Indian River Board of Education approved the schematic drawings for the new Sussex Central High School on Sept. 27. The project architects will now proceed with the building's design phase. The new school is tentatively scheduled to open to students in the fall of 2025.

## SDSA Blue Ribbon Award

From Page 1

schools where students master challenging and engaging content. Now in its 39th year, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools.

Up to 420 schools may be nominated each year. The Department invites National Blue Ribbon Schools nominations from the top education official in all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and the Bureau of Indian Education. Private schools are nominated by the Council for American Private Education.

SDSA was a winner in the Exemplary High Performing Schools category.

The Indian River School District's other Blue Ribbon Award winners are Selbyville Middle School (2018), East Millsboro Elementary School (2008, 2017), Long Neck Element-



The Southern Delaware School of the Arts staff  
 tary School (2005, 2011), John M. Clayton/Frankford Elementary School (2004, 2014), North Georgetown Elementary School (2006), Phillip C. Showell Elementary School (2003) and Lord Baltimore Elementary School (2001).