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Cle Elum Administrator Named Assistant Principal of the Year *Mike O'Donnell Receives Surprise News at School Pep Rally*

CLE ELUM — Mike O'Donnell already holds the distinctive title “King of Climate” at Cle Elum-Roslyn High School. Today, he gained another distinction: 2009 Washington State Assistant Principal of the Year.

The Washington Association of Secondary School Principals, a component board of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), selected O'Donnell for the honor.

Principal Boyd Keyser shared the news with O'Donnell, staff and students during a pep rally this morning at Cle Elum-Roslyn High School. The event featured a surprise presentation of a poster and plaque award from the school as well as a video spoof on O'Donnell. At the rally, the school also celebrated Wednesday's announcement that Susan Johnson, a language arts teacher at Cle Elum-Roslyn High School, is the 2009 Washington Teacher of the Year.



O'Donnell earned the nickname “King of Climate” for his leadership in building a supportive, respectful and productive school environment at Cle Elum-Roslyn High. “Mike does a great job of balancing the need to hold kids accountable for their actions and treating each and every one of them with dignity and respect,” Keyser said. “He relates well to students while also bringing first-class tech skills and intelligence to his role as an instructional leader in our school.”

Using innovative, results-oriented strategies, O'Donnell has taken on challenges with great success. He targeted dwindling student attendance by developing and implementing a new policy. The program, which links the earning of academic credit to attendance, yielded a 62 percent decrease in tardies and absences in just one year; it now serves as a model for other schools.

To foster a sense of community within the school, O'Donnell taps into his own talents. He creates video messages—tributes, birthday greetings, fun facts and even pranks—for the students and shows the videos on a large plasma screen he placed in the school commons. As a volunteer EMT and firefighter, O'Donnell helped plan a mock emergency response that included several governmental agencies in the area. While serving as a member of the Washington Center for Information Technology project, he worked as a summer intern with Boeing to learn first-hand what employers will expect of his students when they enter the workforce.

“Striking a balance between the management tasks of helping run a high school and providing for instructional leadership is a daily challenge,” O’Donnell said when nominated for the award. “Even in the face of approximately 60 discipline referrals each month, I have learned that blindly applying rules, regulations and discipline rarely achieves anything more than discord. . . . I have learned that humanizing the processes and remembering to have fun are key aspects to being both a successful manager and a successful instructional leader.”

In 2007, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction named Cle Elum-Roslyn High a “School of Distinction,” recognizing the school’s improvement in reading and math test scores. Keyser credits O’Donnell for his role in helping students perform to their potential. “Mike gathers all of our assessment data, organizes it into meaningful formats and shares it with the staff,” says Keyser. “He then uses the data to identify students in need and with the staff develops students learning plans that help move the students forward.”

“Mike connects with his students, builds relationships with the staff and brings a sense of joy to the school environment,” said Gary Kipp, AWSP executive director. “His creativity and enthusiasm strengthen the fabric of Cle Elum-Roslyn High School. It is inspiring to see the leadership of assistant principals like Mike, who invest themselves in the success of each and every student.”

O’Donnell will represent Washington state in the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) State and National Assistant Principal of the Year Program, which annually honors a single winner from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity schools. NASSP and Virco, Inc. honor all State Assistant Principals of the Year at an awards banquet in Washington, D.C. and award the 2009 National Assistant Principal of the Year a \$5,000 grant.

O’Donnell will be honored at AWSP’s Assistant Principal of the Year luncheon Feb. 5, 2009, at the Hilton Vancouver Washington. The luncheon is held each year in conjunction with AWSP’s Assistant Principals’ Leadership Conference.

About the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)

The Association of Washington School Principals is a professional association serving principals, assistant principals and principals in training. Formed in 1972, the Association now includes more than 3,500 members from public and private elementary, middle and high schools statewide. It is governed by a board of practicing principals composed of members drawn from three grade-specific boards representing the elementary, middle and high school levels. The mission of AWSP is to support principals and assistant principals and the principalship in the education of all students. For more information on the Association, visit the AWSP Web site at www.awsp.org.

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