

# 2020/2021 Virtual Spotlight AWARDS

THURSDAY, MAY 20, 2021 | 7:00 PM  
[www.portageeducationfoundation.org](http://www.portageeducationfoundation.org)

## *Portage Education Foundation's Mission Statement*

*Our mission is to develop, provide and enhance education for the greatest number of students, staff and community, and allocate funds where they provide the greatest benefit.*



**Portage  
Education  
Foundation**

**PUTTING EXCELLENCE FIRST**

# 2020-2021 PORTAGE PUBLIC SCHOOL RETIREES

## 2020

### Teachers

Kelly Barlow  
Peter Butts  
Ann Cordier  
Patrick Flynn  
Heather Haas  
Cynthia Hunter  
Lucy Laird  
Jennifer McPherson  
Theresa Mills  
Michele Morrison  
Mary Rogers  
Susan Salvat  
Veronica Schaner-Stefanski  
Susan Schroder  
Beth Smith  
Lisa Stucky  
Patricia Tibble  
Cynthia Westley  
Douglas Wilson  
Janet Wydendorf

### Staff

Diane Buckstaff  
Robert Branch  
Kit Dejong  
Linda Dunfield  
Charles Gentner  
Joan Herson  
John Lincoln  
Jayme Ruimveld  
Samual Truax  
L'Harry Williams

### Administration

Kevin Doerfler

## 2021

### Teachers

Diane Aardema  
Esther Burnside  
George Chambers  
Sheila Clothier  
Donna Emerson  
Patrick Fitzhenry  
Kristen Gavlas  
Amy Hamet  
Linda Kalleward  
Kimberly Konkel  
Jim Leander  
Marci Mungovan  
Patricia Ostertag  
Amy Roush-Tack  
Peter Schermerhorn  
Cheryl Tucker  
Jeff VanHoeven

### Staff

Linda Buel  
Pat Dueweke  
Renee Lamond  
LaRena Silverman-Gibson  
Ruth Utter  
Valerie Ward  
Marcia VandenOever  
Julie Zimmer  
Deborah Bosch

### Administration

Jeff Hamilton  
Elizabeth Hartmen  
Ronald Herron

### Past Spotlight Award Winners

Kathy Evans  
Karen French-Hall  
James Menchinger  
Kathy Mulay  
Laurel Scheidt  
Deborah VanAntwerp

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## **WELCOME**

Bill Burhans

## **PROGRAM - VIDEO SPOTLIGHT AWARDS**

Bill Klinesteker

Diane Glass

Nancy Nott

## **VIDEO TRIBUTE OF ALL RETIREES**

Tom Sielatycki

## **TRIBUTE TO RETIREES**

Senator Sean McCann

## **SALUTE FROM PORTAGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Mark Bielang, Superintendent

## **CONGRATULATORY REMARKS**

Chris Furlong, Portage Education Association

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

Bill Burhans, President



# Bill Klinesteker

It all began one beautiful October morning in Kalamazoo, Michigan. On that 2nd day of October, back in the year of 1956, my mother gave birth to me, Bill Klinesteker. Thanks Mom.

From that day forward, except for my college years, I have lived my entire life in the Kalamazoo area. I graduated from Kalamazoo Central High School in 1975 and began working full time at Frank's Nursery on West Main St. I also began dating a co-worker, named Janice, whom I married four years later.

After marriage, our life took us to Traverse City where I received an Associate's Degree in Parks and Recreation Management. During our time in Traverse City we also had our first child. We named her Kate. With the birth of Kate priorities changed, and I found a job as a truck driver. Over the next five years we had two more children, sons Chad and Dylan.

At thirty years old I knew I needed more than just a job, so Janice and I made the commitment for me to go back to school to earn my teaching degree. After two years, I graduated from Western Michigan University and was offered a long-term substitute position teaching second-grade at Parkwood Upjohn in Kalamazoo. Needing a full-time position, I sent out resumes to a dozen or so districts including Anchorage, Alaska and Mackinac Island. To my delight, Portage Public Schools was the first to respond.

After the initial interview process, I was asked to speak with Fan Winegar, the principal at Waylee Elementary School. The interview must have gone well, because she hired me as the new first-grade teacher. I was scared to death. Those three years teaching first-graders were beyond challenging, but extremely rewarding. I learned valuable lessons that I took with me into every classroom over the next 22 years. I took those lessons into a third-grade classroom, spending the next four years not only teaching, but directing Student Council, Safety Patrol, Ski Club, Yo Yo Club and starting what would end up being twelve years of annual Talent Shows.

With all of this going on, the best was yet to come. After teaching third grade, I changed to fifth-grade where I would stay for the remainder of my career. But that wasn't the biggest change. After teaching fifth-grade for a couple years I was fortunate enough to have a new student come into my classroom. His name was Max, and although he, nor anyone else knew at the time, he was about to change the lives of hundreds of his peers.

Max came to Waylee twice a week from Croyden School in Kalamazoo. Max was in a classroom at Croyden for children with severe disabilities. Max lived in the Waylee neighborhood and the intent of him being in our class was for him to socialize with the neighborhood kids. Max quickly became a welcome member of our class.

After a few months in our fifth-grade classroom, a student asked, "Where does Max go when he's not here?" None of us had any idea of the strength and legacy that question would have on us. Because of that question, the class took a field trip to Croyden. Then we took another trip to Croyden, Then students from Croyden came to us. These trips began a fourteen-year journey that introduced over 1200 students to their peers with disabilities. These 1200 students learned how to communicate with those who could not speak, walk with those who could not walk, see with those who could not see, but most importantly, they learned how to laugh with those who could laugh.

Before every trip I would remind the Waylee, and eventually 12th Street students that we would not look for the differences in these students, but find the similarities we all have in common. Over the next fourteen years I was able to take each of these 1200 students on three different trips, twelve to fifteen at a time. They would read with each other, play games with each other, go on scavenger hunts with each other, eat snacks with each other and the list goes on. It was important for me to not just introduce them with one trip, but to give each of the students the opportunity to feel comfortable interacting with their new friends that so often are pointed at, ignored, laughed at or mimicked. I wanted them to understand the human connection between us all and to then, hopefully have them teach others that did not have this unique opportunity. I knew one trip would not be enough to accomplish this goal. I only wished I could have taken them each ten times.

Over the years of running the Buddy Program, as we called it, I spoke with many parents, from all four schools. Parents from Croyden and WoodsEdge told me they had kids come up to them in parks, malls and restaurants just to say "Hi" to their child. They said that had never happened before. Parents from Waylee and 12th Street told me their children found new friends and told them they never realized that kids with those kinds of disabilities could be so much like them. Many of the Waylee and 12th Street students even volunteered at Croyden and WoodsEdge during the summer with a few becoming special education teachers, because of the program.

As with all good things, in 2014 my teaching career came to an end, and with no one able to run the Buddy Program, it also came to an end. I was taught at a young age that success is measured not in the things you own, but in the differences you make. I hope I made some differences.

I am now in my sixth year of retirement enjoying time with family and friends, and traveling whenever possible. I am also pursuing another passion of mine, photography. It has helped me look even closer at those small details in nature that eventually ties us all together.

I have also published seven books, with two more in the works. All but one of the books were written for children and use my photographs. My latest book is an illustrated book called, "The Field Trip." It is based on a fifth-grade class that visits a school for disabled students.



# Diane Glass

Now in my 2nd year of retirement, I can certainly say, "Oh, how the time flies!" Music has always been an important part of my life. I began singing and taking piano lessons at a young age and continued while growing up in Portage. I was involved in both church music and Portage Public School choirs with directors, David Reichard and Del Thusius. After graduation, I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Education from Spring Arbor University, obtained elementary self-contained classroom certification from Oakland University, and received Orff Level I Certification at Anderson University. I was a trained teacher for the Aesthetic Education Program in Kalamazoo County, and I am a long-

time member of the West Michigan Orff Chapter (WMOC) and American Orff Schulwerk Association (AOSA). With teaching positions in Kentucky, Climax Scotts, and Portage, I completed nearly 30 years of teaching elementary and middle school music before retiring in 2018.

Teaching in Portage Public Schools fulfilled both a dream and a life goal. As a graduate of Portage Public Schools and parent of three daughters who are also graduates of PPS, I looked forward to the possibility of one day teaching in this wonderful school district. My dream became a reality when I began teaching at Central Elementary, Moorsbridge Elementary, Central Middle School, and, finally, Lake Center Elementary. My years of teaching were very rewarding, as I loved my job and my students and working with and learning from the most amazing colleagues, parents, and administrators. However, my greatest joy was teaching and making music with thousands of students. I enjoyed creating lessons and experiences that were engaging and fun, while at the same time enhancing the grade-level curriculum. My lessons involved all students in singing, movement, speech, and playing instruments in an environment that was safe for exploration and learning. Through many wonderful performances that my students helped create, they were able to demonstrate their talents along with concepts that they learned through music. Music is such an integral part of life. My desire was for my students to learn to love music, to be able to create music on their own, and to gain a solid musical foundation for the future.

Now that I am retired, I enjoy spending more time with my family: my husband of 44 years, Craig, who retired with me as my sound tech, after assisting in every program that I ever directed; daughters Sarah, Rebekah, and Anna; sons-in-love Mike, Jake, and Ryan; and our four beautiful grandchildren, Luke, Avery, Isaac, and Joshua. I enjoy traveling (we have lifetime passes to all the National Parks and hope to visit as many as possible), reading, making photo memory books, and working in my yard. I am also blessed to volunteer at my church as a musician and as a children's ministry leader.

Music has been an integral part of my personal and professional life. Even in retirement, I will continue to enjoy listening to and making music. But most of all, I will cherish the memories of my many, many students who learned to enjoy music with me and who taught me so much in return. They will probably never know the many ways they have enriched my life.



# Nancy Nott

Nancy Nott started her teaching career in 1980 working with disabled adults at McKercher Rehabilitation Center in Kalamazoo. She also worked at Hackett High School, Comstock High School, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and in the ATYP program. However, the final—and best—24 years of her career were with Portage Public Schools.

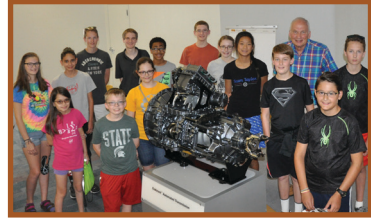
During her tenure at PNHS, Nott taught nearly every course at every ability level that the English department has offered. She also led several student organizations, including the Gay-Straight Alliance, Korean Club, Literature Circles, Creative Writing Club, Ethics Bowl and Peace Jam (where she

and her students met both the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu). She also enjoyed advising the schoolwide literary magazine, “Etched on the Head of a Pin,” for 15 years. She was active in seeking out performance and publication opportunities for her students, hosting the building-wide Poetry Out Loud competition and an annual Poempalooza, and regularly submitting student work to the Kalamazoo Friends of Poetry chapbook contest. Nott was an integral member of the International Baccalaureate teaching staff. She taught both junior and senior year IB English and was also a co-teacher for Theory of Knowledge. In addition, she also served as the CAS (Creativity, Action, Service) Coordinator for IB Diploma candidates. She sees the IB program as a highlight of her career and one of PPS’s greatest assets.

While she was energized by the freedom and rigor of the IB curriculum, Nott has a special place in her heart for creative writing. “Creative writing is my passion,” she shares, smiling. “Students have things they need to say, and I have enjoyed being able to empower that voice.” Among her many accolades, she was the 2015 Touchstone Creative Writing Teacher of the Year, which was meaningful to her as it recognized her commitment to lifting-up student writers. That same year, an anonymous donor would give \$4,000 in Nott’s name to establish the Nancy Nott Poetry Scholarship for a graduating senior. Nott also modeled the writing process for her students and had her first chapbook published in 2016 after winning a Kalamazoo Friends of Poetry contest.

“She is a teacher who goes above and beyond in every facet,” shares Class of 2018 graduate Matt Hurwitz. “She believes in every single one of her students, and she doesn’t let anyone fail. She is everything that a great teacher should be and more.” Nott is equally respected and adored by her colleagues. “Nancy is our energizer bunny of enthusiasm and passion,” says IB English teacher Scott Crocker, who has taught alongside Nott for the last 21 years. “I go to her when I have a question or concern about anything—teaching or otherwise.” Nott’s colleagues describe her not just as a wise giver of advice, but a fierce friend and advocate in relentless pursuit of implementing student-centered best practices that help students reach their fullest potential. Nott, in turn, says the faculty at PN was a constant source of inspiration, collaboration and joy. She even had the opportunity—to her great pleasure—of working with her daughter as a colleague. Sarah Nott is currently the Art teacher at PN and mother and daughter were able to work in the same building for three years before Nott retired.

Nott now works part time as a Mentor/Coach for students in the Kalamazoo County Early Middle College program. She also teaches private Creative Writing workshops and continues to be an Examiner for the International Baccalaureate Organization. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, gardening, hiking, biking, skiing and about anything else that allows her to be outdoors. She is deeply grateful for the unending love and support of her husband, Robin, and her two daughters, Sarah and Emily.



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