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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release – January 6, 2023

Lake County School District names finalists for Teacher of the Year



Daniel Dilocker
East Ridge Middle



Jessica Noblin
Leesburg Elementary



Don Dickson
Umatilla High

TAVARES – One elementary school teacher, one high school teacher, and one middle school teacher are starting off 2023 right. A panel of six independent judges named three deserving individuals as finalists for the 2024 Lake County Schools Teacher of the Year.

The three finalists were notified today by Superintendent Diane Kornegay, School Board members, and a caravan of

representatives from the district, the Education Foundation of Lake County and various sponsors including Jenkins Auto Group and Ernie Morris Enterprises. “We are fortunate to have outstanding teachers in Lake County, and today it was an honor to recognize a few of our very best for their professionalism and dedication to student achievement,” said Superintendent Diane Kornegay.

The entourage visited Daniel Dilocker, a technology and robotics teacher at East Ridge Middle; Jessica Noblin, 5th grade teacher at Leesburg Elementary; and Don Dickson, a 10-12 ELA teacher at Umatilla High to honor each along with their respective principals, school staff and students.

Dilocker has been teaching for sixteen years and has been at East Ridge Middle for the last six. In addition to this honor, he was previously named as a finalist for Lake County Schools Teacher of the Year in 2019. As a robotics teacher, Dilocker stated in his application, “There is no better feeling as a teacher than to help a student find their passion. I believe that it is a teacher’s responsibility to prepare our students for their post-secondary lives through academic and social education. It is an honor to be a part of my students’ lives and to help them develop the intrinsic motivation necessary to pursue their dreams with pride and confidence.”

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Noblin has been a teacher at Leesburg Elementary since 2007. She is currently the math/science grade level chair and has been a first, third, and fourth grade teacher at Leesburg Elementary. In addition to being in a classroom, Noblin has also worked as the math instructional coach and curriculum resource teacher helping her fellow teachers with the necessary guidelines provided by the state. When asked how she has contributed to the improvement of the school culture, Noblin stated in her application, "Leesburg Elementary is more than just a building, it is my safe place. I am genuinely invested in the success of our students, teachers, and school." In addition to her classroom responsibilities and math/science chair duties, Noblin is responsible for the New Teacher Orientations on campus where she serves as a teacher mentor and supervises teaching interns.

Dickson has been working in education for 27 years. Twenty-six of those have been in Lake County. Throughout his time with Lake County Schools, Dickson has worked as an Assistant Principal, Instructional Dean, and English teacher. A former student, now a teacher for Lake County Schools, stated, "You are certainly an inspiration to many. You were the first teacher to really make things click for me. You made teaching seem like a cool career to have, and it stuck with me until I finally decided to take the plunge. Your class had a huge impact on what my life would become." In his application, Dickson wrote "I believe the biggest impact is brought through culture, the connections and relationships among teachers and students. Strategies and systems do NOT work if relationships aren't there."

At a celebration on February 2nd, one of the three finalists will be named Lake's newest Teacher of the Year and will drive away with the grand prize, a 2023 Hyundai Elantra from Jenkins Auto Group. Ernie Morris Enterprises will be providing a new chair for every nominee and will be installing a 21st Century Classroom designed to the winner's specifications. The Lake winner will go on to compete at the state level for the title of Florida Teacher of the Year.

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