

CCS Instructor Teacher Of Year

BY MIKE JAQUAYS

Clinton Central School Class of 1977 graduate Christina Buschmann knew when she was in seventh grade she wanted to teach other people to be physically active and keep a positive mental attitude.

That passion for helping people live healthier lives would lead to a successful three decade-plus career teaching physical education and coaching for her alma mater.

"I was really blessed with that. Not everybody knows their purpose at such a young age," Buschmann said.

Although Buschmann retired last June, her longtime commitment to her students has definitely not been forgotten. On Nov. 18, Buschmann was honored for her years of teaching and coaching with

the New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance 2016 Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year award at their annual convention at Turning Stone Resort Casino in Verona.

She had also won the NYS AHPERD Joy of Effort award in 2014.

"When they called, I said 'Are you kidding?' I was just overwhelmed with joy," Buschmann said of learning she was named teacher of the year. They didn't tell her who nominated her for that honor, she added.

Buschmann was joined at the event by family, colleagues and administrators Dr. Steve Grimm, the district superintendent, and Dr. Shaun Carney, the Middle School principal. Buschmann said

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she had worked with many administrators during the years, but those two, along with the current Board of Education, have been the most supportive to the teachers for the Clinton schools.

Their presence as she received her award showed their commitment to their faculty, she said.

"They came to be there for me. That shows just how rocking they are," Buschmann said. "They have always been very supportive, and I've never felt intimidated by them."

She recalled her first day working with Carney as one that truly demonstrated his compassion right from the beginning.

It was the first day of school in September 2012, and everything was normal for the beginning of the year until Buschmann got a call during her morning class break. It was bad news about her health, and she said she broke down crying.

Carney was right there for her, though, saying she could do whatever she needed to; he would even watch her classes for her if she needed to go home.



PHOTO BY MIKE JAQUAYS

Recently retired Clinton Central School physical education teacher Christina Buschmann, center, is flanked by Middle School Principal Dr. Shaun Carney, left, and district Superintendent Dr. Steve Grimm. Buschmann was named the 2016 Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

eating right, exercising, and keeping a positive attitude have all helped her in her battle with the disease.

"A positive attitude is a choice," Buschmann said. "I always try to see the bright side of everything."

She earned her associates degree at Herkimer County

day, but it is definitely a rewarding experience."

Buschmann lives in Waterville with her husband Jim. He has always been a big supporter to her, she complimented, even in the many, many hours she has spent away from home during her teaching and coaching

or her if she needed a place to go home.

"He had compassion for me right from the beginning," Buschmann said.

But Buschmann knew exactly where she needed to be at that time. She stayed at the school, wanting to be there with her students, drawing comfort from their presence in her life. It was also the first day of field hockey practice for the year, and coaching that sport was one of her biggest passions.

Buschmann has called on life experiences good and bad to teach her students. She is a four-year breast cancer survivor, and has used that as an invaluable lesson for her students to show them cancer isn't just all about death and gloom. She taught her classes all through her chemotherapy treatments, and shared as much of the process with the children as possible.

"I wanted to be a positive example to them," she said. "I think in seeing me, their whole idea of what cancer was changed."

One day, a youngster asked if the class could see her bald head. She asked if they had ever seen a bald woman before, and then took off her hat. After about 30 seconds, one of the little boys said to her, "Mrs. Buschmann, you are beautiful."

Much of that beauty radiates from within. She said her personal commitment to

everybody.

She earned her associates degree at Herkimer County Community College, her bachelors degree at SUNY Brockport and her masters degree in physical education with a concentration in child and adult fitness from Syracuse University.

Buschmann served as CCS department chair for health and physical education in grades K-12 for 12 years and as Clinton Schools Fitness Center director for 11 years. She was also co-advisor of Rachael's Warriors, a group that helps prevent bullying and promotes caring.

When she first applied, Buschmann was one of more than 100 applicants for what at the time was a temporary position in the Elementary School in September 1985. She was thrilled to find out she got that job.

"I couldn't believe they were going to pay me to do something I loved doing," she said. It got even better, as some reshuffling in staff ended up leaving that temporary position available for her to take full time.

The position is much more than a job, of course, and teachers are truly dedicated to their students' education rather than simply earning a paycheck, she said.

"I truly believe that teachers do not enter this profession for the money, nor to have their summers off," Buschmann said. "There is never an easy

spend away from home during her teaching and coaching years.

"He never complained," Buschmann said. "He was always there to make dinners or take care of the dogs."

She still plays field hockey, and recently received a grant to develop a fundamentals program for youngsters. Buschmann said she hopes to have that up and running by next spring.

Even as she started her higher education towards her teaching career, Buschmann was faced with a major obstacle. She wasn't really all that good at science, she admitted, and science was going to be a big part of the educational process taking her towards becoming a physical teacher.

Some people even thought she should give up on her dream because of that, she recalled.

"They tried to discourage me, but I didn't listen," Buschmann said. "I knew I was going to do it."

Buschmann said anything is possible if a person makes up his or her mind.

"Never give up," she said. "Don't let anything stand in your way. I never gave up on my purpose in life. I have always tried to teach my students to get involved and stay involved, and as I gained knowledge I shared as much of it as I could."

The Top Teacher



In reading the story done by our Clinton reporter, Mike Jaquays, about the outstanding honor given to retired Clinton Middle School teacher Christina Buschmann, two thoughts came to mind.

1. She certainly deserved it. And,
2. Where was she when I was taking physical classes in junior high? (Actually, the

answer to that is still in junior high herself.)

But even then, said the Waterville resident, she knew she wanted to teach physical fitness and positive mental health to others. So she did, landing a job at her Clinton alma mater and spending many happy years there until her retirement last June.

Anyone who has ever had the pleasure/challenge of being around a newly-minted teenager becomes well acquainted with the dance on eggshells to keep their moods somewhat close to tolerable. That Buschmann chose to enter that world on a daily basis says much for the woman's own positive mindset.

She taught, in the gym, in the classroom, on the field. She encouraged children to never give up on their goals, to stay positive. Those were more than words, more than that day's lesson to teach and move on to something else.

Buschmann opened her heart to her students by sharing her fight with cancer in an honest and direct way. They in turn rewarded that trust with words and gestures of love and encouragement. Those are life lessons that will ripple for decades as all those students treat others facing illness and struggles with that same approach.

While she is retired from her teaching career, Buschmann is by no means retired from teaching. She is developing a fundamentals program for kids she hopes to launch in the spring.

Of all the wonderful teachers of Middle School students last year, the top one in physical education came from Clinton. It is an honor that goes to Buschmann, her students, teaching colleagues and the Clinton Central School District as a whole.

It is also well deserved to someone who dedicated her life to doing what she set out to do back in seventh grade.