

Marshfield Columbus Catholic's Deborah Kennedy Awarded 2024 WAFLT Distinguished Language Educator Award

MARSHFIELD, WI – Marshfield Columbus Catholic Schools is proud to announce that one of its recently retired teachers, Señora Deborah Kennedy, will be receiving the 2024 Distinguished Language Educator Award on November 1, 2024 in Appleton. The award will be presented by the Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers (WAFLT) during its Fall Conference.

"Señora Kennedy is one of the most dedicated and passionate teachers I've met," said Michael Lambrecht, Principal at Columbus Catholic Middle and High School. "It has truly been an honor to work with her since I started here at Columbus in 2019. We are so pleased to see her receive this much deserved award!"

According to Andrea Behn, WAFLT President-Elect, "This prestigious accolade is WAFLT's highest recognition, awarded to an individual who has demonstrated exceptional achievement and service to the language teaching profession."

About Señora Kennedy

Señora Kennedy's illustrious career as a Spanish teacher spans over 45 years, beginning with her graduation from Kalamazoo College in 1978. Throughout her tenure, she has dedicated herself to not only teaching the Spanish language but also fostering a deep appreciation for the cultures where Spanish is spoken. Her innovative approach to language education has left an indelible mark on her students, colleagues, and the broader community.

Kennedy's teaching philosophy emphasizes immersive, practical experiences. She has led numerous trips abroad, providing her students with the invaluable opportunity to use their Spanish skills in real-world settings. For those unable to travel, she has brought the world into her classroom through guest speakers, cultural events, and engaging multimedia resources. Her creative methods, including the beloved "Sr. Toro" Beanie Baby Bull and interactive activities, have made learning Spanish a joyful and memorable experience for students of all ages.

Throughout her career, Kennedy has been a pillar of Columbus Catholic Schools in Marshfield, WI. She rejuvenated the language department with her dedication and innovative ideas, creating programs that span from elementary to high school. Her initiatives, such as the Saturday Language Camps, Theatre in the Square, and a

comprehensive K-12 Spanish program, have enriched the educational experience for countless students. Most notably, the mission trips she takes with her older students have left a lasting legacy of service and international connections.

Kennedy's contributions extend beyond the classroom. She has presented at numerous WAFLT conferences, sharing her expertise and inspiring fellow educators. Her mentorship has guided many new teachers, and her work has been recognized with multiple awards, including the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellowship Award and the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry Crystal Apple Award.

Señora Kennedy's legacy is one of passion, dedication, and a profound impact on the language teaching profession. Though she is now retired from full-time teaching, she plans to continue sharing her love for Spanish and Hispanic cultures through guest teaching and community engagement.

About the Peru Mission Team

Every two years the Columbus Catholic High School Spanish students (Peru Mission Team) have an opportunity to travel to Casa Hogar, Peru for 10 days to do service projects and put their Spanish language skills to the test. So far, they have traveled to Peru five times, starting in 2014 (the 2020 trip was canceled due to COVID-19). Casa Hogar is a mission of the Diocese of La Crosse, WI and was created by Father Joe Walijewski, or Juan Pablo II. It is an orphanage that has become a leader in the treatment and care for children who come from poverty stricken and high risk backgrounds in Peru. In between trips, the Mission Team is holding fundraising activities to raise money for the trip including bake sales, a fall Language Camp and Piñata Sale.

This past summer, the 16 members of 2024 Peru Mission Team (which included some of our Spanish students, CCS alumni, parents and staff) worked on volunteer projects such as sorting 28 suitcases of shoes/donations, playing games with the orphans, painting park equipment, watering trees and putting up a volleyball net.

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About Columbus Catholic Schools

Columbus Catholic Schools is a comprehensive educational system for students age 3 through high school graduation. Columbus Catholic Schools builds a strong foundation of faith, knowledge and skills to help each student achieve success.

Columbus Catholic Schools and all its educational sites are nationally accredited by the WRISA (Wisconsin Religious and Independent School Accreditation). National accreditation standards require a high degree of excellence and a commitment to continuous improvement.

About WAFLT

The Wisconsin Association for Language Teachers (WAFLT) is dedicated to the promotion, support, and improvement of teaching and learning languages. Through advocacy, professional development, and resources, WAFLT strives to enhance the language teaching profession and advance language education.