

THE FORUM

Coconut Creek Elementary teacher wins Crystal Apple award



Coconut Creek Elementary fourth-grade teacher Dawn Wolf was awarded a Crystal Apple and a \$500 merchandise certificate from School Specialty. **CARLINE JEAN/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL**

By Brett Shweky

South Florida Sun Sentinel

From being the debate coach to the safety patrol coordinator to the organizer of the Students Against Violence Everywhere program, Coconut Creek Elementary's Dawn Wolf embodies what it means to go above and beyond as a teacher.

Wolf was recently recognized for her hard work in and out of the classroom, becoming one of the annual School Specialty Crystal Apple award winners.

The contest, which is in its eighth year, invites educators and school communities to nominate deserving teachers who display key attributes such as inspiration, leadership and passion.

Along with receiving a Crystal Apple trophy, each of the three winners are awarded \$500 merchandise certificates from School Specialty plus a \$250 merchandise certificate for their school.

School Specialty offers everything from learning environments, furniture and equipment, to safety and security products, educational technology, school and office supplies, curriculum and supplemental learning curriculum materials.

"When I found out I was one of the top 10 winners for the country, I was shocked," said Wolf, a fourth-grade teacher. "What an honor it was to be nominated. The speech my former student's mom [Valerie Mercado] gave was incredible and made me tear up.

"When I found out I won, my heart skipped a beat," she said. "I love what I do and get pure joy from teaching my students. Having this shows how much of a difference I make in their lives daily. Students from 10 years ago still tell me I'm their favorite and it makes me happy knowing I made their life special in some way."

After being nominated by Mercado, Wolf soon learned that she was chosen as one of the top contestants for the award.

Once the top 10 nominees were selected, Wolf had two weeks to rack up as many votes as she could over social media, asking every person she could find to vote for her once a day for two weeks.

"This award was a great honor in such a hard field to work in right now," Wolf said. "I'm going on my 12th year and there's always a struggle. Between what's going on with gun violence in our schools to COVID, teaching isn't what it used to be. However, coming in every day and teaching the future is what it's all about. My students past and present make me love what I do, and I wouldn't trade my career for anything."

Already thinking about how to improve her classroom with the certificates, Wolf said she would like to add more flexible seating in her room to help students avoid sitting in chairs all day and also have extra supplies on hand for students with low-income backgrounds.

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