

2018-2019 MMEA Award Winners



Hall of Fame

Catherine (Cathy) Schmidt has been a music educator for 43 years, teaching in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. She earned her B.S. and M.S. in Music Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and her Ph.D. in Music Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She holds certificates in Orff-Schulwerk and Kodály. Cathy and her husband Greg reside in Winona, MN and have two adult children, David and Jennifer.

Cathy has been active in professional and state music education organizations throughout her career. As a teacher of K-6 general music in Normal, IL, she served as co-chair (1979-1981) and chair (1981-1984) for the District III Jr. High-Elementary General Music Division of the Illinois Music Educators Association. After moving to Winona, Cathy taught K-6 general music in Fountain City, WI for five years and then began at Winona State University in 1991. She served on the music teacher licensure committee for the MN Board of Teaching in 1995-96, developing standards. An active member of MMEA and the MN Society for Music Teacher Education throughout her years at WSU, she served as Classroom Vice President on the MMEA Board from 2001-2003, co-chaired the MMEA Mentoring Task Force from 2005-2008, and served on the MMEA Classroom Advisory Council from 2003-2009.



Educator of the Year

Wayne Ivers is currently the Director of Bands at Marshall High School. He has been employed at Marshall High School since 1983. Upon his arrival in Marshall the band program consisted of 175 band members in two concert bands, one jazz band, one pep band, and a marching band that totaled 110 members. Currently the band program consists of 225 members involved in four concert bands, two jazz bands, two pep bands, and a marching band that totals 180 members.

Prior to his arrival in Marshall Wayne was the Band and Choir Director in Clara City, MN for 6 years. While in Clara City the program grew from 85 to 130 in grades 9-12 alone. The Clara City Marching Band was a two time State American Legion Field Marching Class Champion.

Wayne has served on several state and local boards and committees including two terms on the Minnesota Music Educators State Board, Ex-Officio Officer and co-founder of the Marshall Music Boosters, board and coaches committee member for the Marshall Amateur Hockey Association, committee member for Marshall American Legion Baseball, and has been the Chair for several youth Hockey and Baseball Local, District, and Region tournaments as well as the Chair of the 2003 13B State Baseball Tournament.



Educator of the Year

Karen Kruse, for 42 years (since 1977), has been a full-time employee as an elementary classroom music teacher in the St. Cloud Area Schools – District #742 at Madison Elementary School. Graduating from New Prague High School in 1973, Karen chose to pursue her undergraduate degree from the College of St. Benedict in Saint Joseph, Minnesota. With intentions to become an accountant, Karen was persuaded by her mentor, the late Sister Mary Helene Juettner, OSB, to choose K-12 music as her career. She believed that Karen's destiny was to work with thousands of children. This musical journey has sustained more than four decades!

Karen achieved her Master's Degree from St. Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota and her MA+60 from the University of St. Thomas. Four decades in education have also brought multiple trainings in PBIS, ENVoY, Chinese Immersion, CLR, AVID, Co-teaching, EL, Trauma Sensitive, and Mental Health strategies. During her tenure, Karen has received multiple nominations for the Teacher of the Year, Leadership in Educational Excellence awards, and district accolades and recognition as "I AM 742". She was recently honored this past fall by the Apollo High School football team for her love and support.

(Catherine Schmidt's bio, continued)

A strong proponent of professional development, Cathy started the WSU Music Education Workshop Series (ongoing for 27 years) for her students and area music teachers. She serves as advisor to WSU's active NAFME Collegiate Chapter and brings students to the MMEA Midwinter Clinic each year. The chapter presented an annual songfest for a number of years, inviting elementary school choirs from around the region for a day of singing with a clinician, providing professional development for teachers attending the songfest and WSU students.

During her years at WSU, Cathy has maintained a strong focus on the importance of multicultural music education. She coordinates the WSU International Series for the campus and community. The free concerts feature musicians from across the globe, and music education students attend as part of their coursework. She also administered a Javanese gamelan program for WSU students and community members from 1998-2006.

Cathy has been an active clinician, presenting music education workshops throughout the region. She co-presented sessions on mentoring and coaching in teacher preparation at several national conferences, including the NAFME Biennial Conference and the National Group Piano and Piano Pedagogy Forum. In the summers of 1997 and 2000, she traveled to the Philippines where she served as guest clinician at the University of Saint Thomas in Manila and taught seminars for the department of education on the island of Luzon. For the past three years Cathy has been working on projects focused on Jamaican music education, visiting the country to provide music classes and work with teachers in primary schools. She is also part of a group writing music education curriculum with the Jamaican Ministry of Education, sponsored by the Organization for Strategic Development in Jamaica.

(Wayne Ivers' bio, continued)

Wayne was President and Chief Negotiator of the Clara City Education Assoc. and the Marshall Education Association Chief Negotiator since 1998.

Wayne is one of the founders of the Pursuit of Excellence Marching Band Competition hosted in conjunction with the Marshall Music Boosters, Marshall Public Schools, and Southwest Minnesota State University. Pursuit of Excellence annually includes 18 of the best Marching Bands from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and South Dakota.

As Director of the Marshall Tiger Marching Band the band has become one of the top groups in the upper mid-west placing in the top of their class throughout Minnesota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Iowa. The Marching Band has competed ten times in Bands of America Competitions placing in the top five in Class, eight of those ten times and top 3 in Class 4 times. In 2005 the band placed 2nd in Class AA and 12th in Open Class Finals. In 2012 they were the St. Louis Super Regional Class A Champion.

In 1995 The Marshall High School Music Department was recognized by the State of Minnesota as a Program of Excellence. In 2005, 2013, and 2017 Marshall was selected by the NAMM Organization as one of the top 100 Communities in Music Education in the United States. In 2012 Wayne was named Minnesota's representative to School Band and Orchestra Magazine's "50 Directors Who Make a Difference".

Wayne has judged Concert Band, Solos, Ensembles, Jazz Bands, and Marching Bands throughout Minnesota and South Dakota over the past forty years.

(Karen Kruse's bio, continued)

Underlying Karen's love of education is her great passion for service. She is the leader of several committees and organizations for Madison School. She also serves as the mentor for training new teachers who join the Madison School staff. Karen is highly credited for seeing and meeting the needs of the staff, students, and their families and volunteering to serve wherever needed. Karen is an integral part of FACT (Feeding Area Children Together) which supplies a food pack each Friday in the backpacks of hundreds of students in need.

Outside of Karen's work at Madison School, she operates a private piano studio of 60-70 students per year. Karen's mantra in life is, "Keep a song in your heart!"