

# West Goshen's Aimee Schade wins \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

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SHEILA SELMAN | THE GOSHEN NEWS West Goshen Elementary School TAP master teacher Aimee Schade gives a speech following the announcement of her award Thursday morning at the school. To the left of Schade is Indiana State Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz and to her right is Lowell Milken, chairman and co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation.

GOSHEN — Aimee Schade knew as soon as she spotted Lowell Milken at West Goshen Elementary School something was up.

Milken, who Schade had run into at education conferences, is the chairman and co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation. The foundation is known for its philanthropic giving toward education.

“When I saw him, I thought, ‘I wonder if our school is going to get an award or something?’” Schade, a TAP master teacher for West Goshen, said.

And then Milken, who was giving clues to the crowd as to why he was there, announced it was a teacher who would be receiving an award.

Wondering who among her peers it might be, Schade was in shock when Milken announced her as the winner of the Milken Educator Award — an award that comes with \$25,000 to be used any way Schade sees fit. She said she may let the kids help her decide what to do with the money.

“I’m still in shock,” Schade said shortly after the presentation. “This is not real.”

The award was kept a secret from staff at the school until the big reveal by Milken.

On hand for the surprise were Indiana’s State Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz, local school and city officials, Rep. Wes Culver and a representative from U.S. Rep. Jackie Walorski’s office — plus all of the students at West Goshen Elementary.

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade sat on the gym floor in rows excited by and curious of all of the extra adults at their school, including camera crews.

Although they were not in on the secret, students were actively involved in the program. A student led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance and kindergartners gave a short performance.

And then, after an introduction by Ritz, Milken dropped clues as to his purpose. With 30 years of experience behind him in giving out Milken Educator Awards, Milken revved up the students and let them help him in his presentation.

When Schade's name was announced, the room thundered with applause and a shocked Schade made her way to the podium to a \$25,000 check and congratulations.

"It's not what I expected at all," said Schade, who was quick to point out that "Everyone here is a great teacher."

"You teach with your heart," she said. "We're here for the kids."

One of the best moments of her day, Schade said, is opening a car door for students and saying good morning.

Schade has stayed at West Goshen for 14 years with the goal of making it a top school.

"I think the community of the school has come a long way," she said. "The kids love each other."

As for herself, Schade said she believes the teacher advancement program (TAP) has made her a better teacher and leader. Schade's job at West Goshen involves guiding instructional best practices for faculty. She looks at student and teacher assessment data to determine what students are learning and what they aren't, and then she figures out how to address those needs.

Schade also leads weekly professional development sessions and conducts classroom evaluations among many other duties.

It's that ability to lead and help draw out the best in other teachers that drew the philanthropist to picking Schade for the foundation's award, Milken said.

"It's rewarding to come and meet a teacher who makes a difference," he said.

## **About the Milken Educator Award**

According to the Milken Family Foundation based out of Santa Monica, California, the Milken Educator Award program provides recognition and unrestricted financial awards of \$25,000 to exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists, who are furthering excellence in U.S. schools. This year, up to 35 American teachers will be honored. Indiana has two recipients, including Schade.

Along with education, the Milken Family Foundation also honors people in medical research and public health.

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