

The Citizens' Advisory Committee for Special Education for St. Mary's County was pleased to present the Fourth Annual "Rise Up" Award at the April 29, 2016, Board of Education meeting for St. Mary's County Public Schools. Elizabeth Snyder, Chair of CACSE, presented the awards with the assistance of Susie Fowler, SMCPS Director of Special Education and Leslie Popielarcheck, Vice-Chair.

Three awards were presented, each of which recognizes individuals and groups in the school system and in the greater community who have gone above and beyond the normal call of duty to support our students with disabilities in their educational endeavors. Ms. Fowler said these awards recognize special educators who have gone to extraordinary efforts to support their students, and Ms Snyder said it was a tough task to select only three groups to receive the award from the many nominations offered.

This year's recipients of a Certificate of Award, include:

- The team of Lynn Sullivan and Lorie Long, bus driver and bus aide for special needs transportation on Bus 284, serving Cpt. Walter Francis Duke Elementary School. Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Long were honored for their care and commitment to a first grader with Down's syndrome; they are able to anticipate and support her needs, make the bus ride as smooth as possible, and have helped to maintain consistency for a child who has already experienced three different elementary schools due to redistricting and inclusion in special programs to meet her needs.



- Margaret "Peggy" Menard, COMPASS Program instructor at Great Mills High School. In addition to supporting a particular freshman with special needs stay organized with school and homework, develop social skills, and learn time management, she also supports him as a sponsor of GAMERZ, a 21<sup>st</sup> Century After School Program that helps students at risk receive academic support for core subjects, organizational skills, and practice of social skills and good sportsmanship through game play. His parents were also very grateful for her efforts in keeping them informed about upcoming events.

- The team of Joanne Clapp, general education teacher, Joyce Carey, special education teacher, Jeannie Krizovensky and Patrick McCay, paraeducators, from Chesapeake Public Charter school. This team works with a kindergarten student with Down's syndrome, and "the bar has been set high for future educators" because they worked with him over the summer to prepare for school, attended to his IEP goals throughout the year, supported his development in motor skills, language, interactions, and life skills. His team helped him develop a love and appreciation for school that ensures future success.



Each winning school will receive selected items under CACSE's "Family Toolbox" program, which provides educationally- and medically-oriented equipment and materials for parents and educators to use on a trial basis or to supplement their classroom instruction. Additional "Family Toolbox" items are available through the St.

Mary's County Public Library system. The special transportation bus drivers and aides will receive items toward a student incentive program, which will be developed.

Additional nominees received a Certificate of Appreciation. They include:

- The team of Shirley Geisbert, special education resource instructor, and Judy Coleman-Kla, SAIL Program instructor, at Benjamin Banneker Elementary School
- Victoria De Biase, COMPASS Program instructor, and Lisa Galati, ISIC, at Cpt. Walter Francis Duke Elementary School
- Elisa Quinn, at Chesapeake Public Charter School
- The team of Ms. Perosio and Ms. Schettini, kindergarten instructors; Ms. Ruthenburg, pre-school special education instructor, and her paraeducators; and the team of Sarah Merry, SAIL Program instructor, and Colleen Singleton, speech therapist; at Green Holly Elementary School
- Patricia Agate, COMPASS Program instructor, and Ashley Abell, special education instructor, at Margaret Brent Middle School
- The team of Sarah Bucchino, Andrea Dulude, interventionist, Amanda Huffman, Laurie McGrath, IEP Chair, Tiffany Melendez, special education instructor, Mangala Simha, paraeducator, Claire Van Beek, speech pathologist, and Sarah Wiland, special education instructor, at Park Hall Elementary School



Awardees are selected from nominations submitted by parents of children with disabilities, and reviewed by the Rise Up Committee, which is comprised of parent representatives to CACSE. CACSE is pleased to recognize the dedicated individuals who work with our students and to thank them for the amazing jobs they do every day, including teachers, paraeducators, and therapists. Many thanks to this year's recipients and nominees, the parents who shared the wonderful stories of their work, and the Director and Staff of the SMCPS Department of Special Education for their assistance.

CACSE acts as an advisory panel to the SMCPS Board of Education as part of Federal and state policy. It is made up of parents, educators, and community representatives from local and regional groups who support individuals with disabilities. Parents and educators are welcome to attend or call in to our public meetings and represent their schools or raise concerns. More information about CACSE can be found at <http://smccacse.org>.

(video link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGAiw\\_ZkMFw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGAiw_ZkMFw) Presentation begins at the 9:50 mark)