

Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • April 16, 2021

When I hired Tea McCaulla and Donna Patrick ahead of the 2015-16 school year, I knew each was a strong teacher in her respective subject. I don't know that I could have foreseen the gifts they would bring to our school and the community.



Now those gifts have been recognized as Tea and Donna have been chosen as the recipients of the 2021 Ohio ACTE Outstanding Educator in Community Service Award.

Nominated by Erika Konowalow, the district's Public Relations coordinator, both women agreed that news of this award left them shocked.

All of Donna's Cosmetology students have Tea as their English teacher and that creates a foundation for the women and their students to work together.

In her nomination, Erika cited the collaborative nature of their friendship: Tea brought her passion for recognizing veterans through the Veterans History Project to our campus and Donna initiated Career-Tech Kids Day, a free half-day career camp for second- through eighth-graders.

"Each woman has worked to help the other with these projects. For several years, the women were SkillsUSA co-advisors and under their guidance, chapter members created a healing garden at the Chillicothe VA. The garden includes multiple benches made by students in our programs," Erika wrote in her nomination.

Tea and Donna exemplify what all quality CTE teachers do, get involved in their community and make a difference in the lives of all of the students they impact and influence.

"Tea and I work as a team — as lead or support — to accomplish each project we do along with the help of our students. Our projects are genuinely from the heart. The biggest reward of all is teaming up with our students to give back to our community with each project we do," Donna said.

The award is appreciated but the pair is most pleased by the involvement of their students in



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the community service projects.

"Providing students with opportunities to give back to their communities is a vital part of my teaching," Tea said. "These projects show students how they can help others by using their skills while also building lasting relationships with other students, organizations and businesses.

"It never gets old when I hear a former student who has returned to help with one of our community service projects say, 'Do you remember when...?'"

Jason Vesey, director of Secondary Education, said community service benefits students.

"While teaching career-technical skills are always at the foundation of what we do at Pickaway-Ross, it is equally important to provide students with opportunities to serve their community. These two teachers round out the student experience with community involvement activities that go beyond the classroom," he said.

Tea and Donna will be presented with their award at the Ohio ACTE Annual Conference in July.

They are great examples for all new and veteran teachers.

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