



Retired teacher, coach selected for 2019 D200 Education Foundation Sue Palmore Award of Excellence

Maintaining a positive attitude is a key to success in the classroom and on the court, something Woodstock's "Mr. Mo" has exemplified as a teacher, coach, referee or volunteer for more than four decades.

Retired Woodstock Community Unit School District 200 teacher and coach Rick Morozink will be honored as the 2019 Woodstock D200 Education Foundation winner of the Sue Palmore Award of Excellence based recommendation of his peers and former students.

Morozink began teaching at then Olson Middle School in 1973 where he also met his wife and fellow Olson teacher, Pat. Over the next 30-plus years, Morozink taught sixth-grade science, math, and history, and coached boys and girls basketball at Olson and eventually at Creekside Middle School. An avid runner, Morozink has also been a longtime middle school track and cross country official.

While Morozink officially retired in 2011, you can still find him today at Creekside Middle School at least a few times a week as a substitute teacher, classroom volunteer, assistant basketball coach or anywhere else he is needed.

Creekside teacher and basketball coach Eric Schleutermann, who nominated Morozink for the award, still benefits from Mr. Mo's volunteer coaching assistance on the court.

"If you walk down the halls and ask a student if they know 'Mr. Mo,' they will all be able to describe him and explain what he has done to help them," Schleutermann said. "Along his journey, he has truly inspired many people with his positive personality and innovative thought."

Morozink will be honored Feb. 9 at the 2019 Annual Groundhog Day Dinner/Auction at Woodstock Harley-Davidson. Last year's event raised \$40,000 for grant funding distributed to District 200 educators to pay for unique educational opportunities for students. Tickets for the dinner are [available on the Foundation's website](#).

Michelle Martin, assistant principal at Verda Dierzen Early Learning Center who worked with Morozink at Creekside, was one of several others who wrote in support of Morozink's nomination for the award.

"Mr. Morozink is a skilled teacher, a passionate coach, a warm and caring individual and a true asset to this school district and community," Martin said. "It is awe-inspiring to consider the immense number of students that this man has impacted in his lifetime."

Morozink said he wanted to stay active upon retiring and reflected on the Thomas Edison quote about another door opening when one closes. “The one that opened was the one that led me right back to what I spent a career doing,” he said.

Morozink said he loves working with kids who are in that big transitional time during middle school, especially when they walk into sixth grade with wide eyes and open minds.

“I’ve always enjoyed that enthusiasm they bring to the table. It’s been fun to watch that development,” Morozink said.

The D200 Education Foundation award is named after Sue Palmore who exemplified service to her community in her roles as a District 200 Board of Education member and member of the D200 Education Foundation. The Education Foundation renamed the Award of Excellence honor after Palmore’s death in 2012 to continue her legacy.

Past recipients include: Bud Swartout (2011); Barb Banker (2012); Bill Schuette (2013); Jim Campion (2014); Miguel Rodriguez (2015); Joy Aavang (2016); John Van Fleet (2017) and Ron Bendis (2018).

Morozink said he is humbled by the Foundation’s recognition. “I always looked up to those individuals as people who were examples of what an educator should be, and to have me considered part of that group is just quite an honor,” he said.



Rick Morozink
2019 Sue Palmore Award of Excellence Recipient

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