



The family of Jessica Noser, third from right, longtime choir director at Licking Valley High School and Middle School, celebrated with her recently when she received the Leaders For Learning award from the Licking County Foundation.

DAVE WEIDIG/THE ADVOCATE

# Leaders For Learning

## Licking County Foundation awards local teachers

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USA TODAY NETWORK

HANOVER – The COVID pandemic posed incredible challenges for teachers, including choir directors.

“We were extremely limited,” said Jessica Noser, in her 23rd year as choir director for Licking Valley High School and Middle School. “We had to Zoom from March to May (of 2020). When we resumed, they were in an auditorium, three rows away from

each other. And the middle schoolers had to meet outside.”

Despite all of that, Noser continued to provide inspiration and growth for her students, like she always has. And on a recent Friday, she was surprised in her classroom with the Licking County Foundation’s Leaders For Learning award.

Noser was one of 12 teachers from around the county to be honored in their rooms, as students looked on, with a \$1,000 grant, plus a hand-blown

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# Teachers

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glass apple designed and crafted at The Works, symbolizing the community's appreciation for their efforts. Leaders For Learning was created in by the foundation in 1993, and grants are made possible through the support of the Lindorf-Warner Memorial Fund. It has changed the lives of nearly 400 teachers who have been honored for their excellence and received more than \$100,000 in grants to support their classrooms or professional development.

Since things are almost back to normal, Noser has noticed a re-dedication by her students, to working hard, making music and striving for excellence.

"When their focus is there, we get to see them make chords that sound amazing," she said. "I get to watch them grow for seven years, from children to almost adults. And they come back as alumni, like many of them did for the (holiday) concert, when it was a full house."

Licking Valley superintendent Scott Beery said Noser demands excellence, but in a way the students can relate to.

"She brings out the absolute best in them," he said. "She's demanding, but she's very supportive. She's amazing."

Valley principal Whitney Malone said it's a real pleasure to see Noser in her classroom with the kids.

"She gets immediate feedback. You can see them respond, and it's incredible growth," Malone said. "And she also helps people in all of the other departments."

Middle school principal Nate Whisner said Noser is accepting of all students, regardless of their ability.

"Kids of various abilities are excited to be in her classroom, on an every day basis," he said.

## Other teachers honored

Here's a look at the other Licking County teachers who were surprised in their classrooms with the award recently:

**Mark Vukovic, C-TEC (satellite at Lakewood High School)** — An information technology instructor for 19 years, Vukovic treats every moment in the classroom as an opportunity to be a positive influence in the student's life. Whether he's teaching them something they did not know, inspiring them to improve a skill they are developing, or just being a kind and respectful person, he



**Connie Hawk, center, director of the Licking County Foundation, and Leslie Blaine, left, Foundation donor services associate, presented longtime Licking Valley High School and Middle School choir director Jessica Noser with the Leaders For Learning award.**  
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wants them leaving his class knowing he did his best to make their life a little better.

**Theresa Applegate, Granville Elementary** — A first grade teacher with 28 years of experience, "Mrs. Applegate is a teacher who connects with every student, walks beside each parent in celebration or concern and genuinely cares for her colleagues and the school community," her nominator said. "Her classroom is peaceful and welcoming where students are welcomed with carefully chosen plants, apple décor and the melodic sounds of their teacher's sing-song greeting."

**Julie Guglielmi, Stevenson Elementary, Heath** — A third grade English Language Arts and social studies teacher in her 24th year, "Mrs. Guglielmi exemplifies excellence in teaching. She believes all children can learn and grow as demonstrated by her own desire to learn and grow," her nominator said. "She will take part in any offered professional learning, especially in her field of reading and writing. More importantly, she is always bringing new ideas to our team from her own initiative and research."

**Anne Beharry, Johnstown High School** — She is in her 29th year of education and currently teaches physical science, chemistry and physics. "Mrs. Beharry has been selected for this award because of her incredible work ethic and commitment to student success. She brings almost three decades of teaching experience into her classroom every day and our students are lucky to have such a knowledgeable teacher," her

nominator said.

**Missy Dutiell, Hebron Elementary, Lakewood** — With over 20 years experience, she currently teaches second grade.

"Mrs. Dutiell is not only a dedicated teacher but has a passion for her entire district. This is her second career, and she has proven that with heart and dedication you can make a difference in students' lives," her nominator said. "Mrs. Dutiell works tirelessly in her classroom to ensure her students are growing. She is the type of teacher that reflects upon her teaching and is willing to go the extra mile to support her students and stretch them academically."

**Amanda Rich, Flying Colors Preschool, Licking County Education Services Center** — "During the summer of 2022, she was asked to obtain her intervention specialist license in order to fill a vacancy in our preschool program which was an unexpected request for her," her nominator said. "After some careful consideration, she agreed to pursue this supplemental license and took her exam with only having three days' notice to prepare. She passed her exam and has taken on her new role at Flying Colors head-on"

**Kathy Gamertsfelder, Licking Heights High School** — She is in her 22nd year at Heights and teaches math. She has taught a wide variety of courses during her time there and served as the department chair for many years.

"Mrs. Gamertsfelder has also served as a mentor for countless new educators over the years; encouraging them to give their all to their students," her nomina-

tor said. "She continues to challenge her students academically and encourages them to strive for success both in the classroom and in their future endeavors. She encourages her students to do their best and use critical thinking skills to stretch their learning. Her ability to engage students encourages even the most reluctant to participate and love mathematics."

**Cindy Myers, Ben Franklin Elementary, Newark** — With 26 years of experience, she currently teaches Title I reading for kindergarten and third grade.

"Mrs. Myers works with our youngest students to foster a love of reading through small group instruction and is a leader among her peers by coordinating and facilitating our Building Leadership Team," her nominator said. "She leads her peers in the analysis of reading data and selection of instructional strategies to support the students in becoming proficient readers and writers."

**Julie Hill, Newton Elementary, North Fork** — With 20 years of experience, she currently teaches second grade.

"Mrs. Hill makes learning fun and accepts each child where they are academically while challenging them to stretch and grow," her nominator said. "She is an asset to Newton Elementary, North Fork Schools and the teaching profession."

**Amy Hall, Northridge Middle School** — She teaches seventh and eighth grade language arts and has been in education for 22 years.

"Over the past couple of years, the middle school has implemented new language arts curriculum and materials, and systems for supporting students at multiple levels. Not only has Mrs. Hall embraced these new materials, but she has also been a leader in the department, reflecting on the new resources and using her years of experience to ensure instruction is meeting her students' needs," her nominator said.

**Chandra Elder, Watkins Memorial High School** — With 15 years in education, she currently teaches AP calculus, calculus and Algebra 1.

"Mrs. Elder exemplifies the ideals of the Leaders for Learning program. She is committed to ensuring that students of all skill levels grow as mathematical thinkers, and her students demonstrate significant academic growth as she builds both their skills and their confidence," her nominator said.

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