

Macomb Daily

March 30, 2016

Dakota teacher wins Excellence in Education award



Joseph Churches poses for a photo with, from left, his father-in-law, Paul Doersam, wife, Diane Churches, and Chippewa Valley School Career Technical Education Director, Claire Brisson after accepting his Excellence in Education award from Michigan State University basketball coach Tom Izzo. (Photo courtesy of the Michigan Lottery.)

By Macomb Daily staff

A Macomb County educator known for his leadership in construction trades education and for leading students in building a house each year.

The award winner, Joseph Churches, teaches construction trades at Dakota High School in Macomb. The school is part of the Chippewa Valley Schools district.

The Michigan Lottery established the Excellence in Education award program in 2014 to recognize outstanding public school educators across the state during the school year.

Winners of the weekly award receive a plaque, a \$500 cash prize, and a \$500 grant to their classroom, school or school district. One of the weekly winners will be selected as the Educator of the Year and will receive a \$10,000 cash prize.

Each winner also will be featured in a news segment on the Lottery's media partner stations: WXYZ-TV in Detroit, FOX 17 in Grand Rapids, and FOX 47 in Lansing. The news segment featuring Churches will air Thursday in Detroit.

For the Excellence in Education awards program, the Lottery has teamed up with Michigan State University basketball coach Tom Izzo. Izzo met recently with Churches at the Breslin Center and presented him with the award.

Churches said his favorite parts of being an educator are “seeing students get motivated, learn and develop a passion to make a career in construction trades.”

He said helping troubled or at-risk students succeed in school and get a good start in life motivates him to do his best each day. “It’s a tremendous feeling when some of the most troubled students come walking through my door years after they’ve graduated and tell me about their careers and how well they’re doing.”

The Excellence in Education award nomination for Churches describes him as teacher who “always goes above and beyond for our students and our community. Both professionally and personally, Joe is kind, personable, caring, always willing to help and put forth the extra effort that may be required in a given situation.”

“Joe teaches 100 students each year and they learn not only the technical skills needed in construction, but develop skills in teamwork, leadership, safety, and much more. As part of their learning, the students apply their skills by building a house each year for Macomb County Habitat for Humanity,” the nomination said, adding that Churches emphasizes safety with the students.

“His program has received national recognition by winning the National Association of Home Builders/Builders Mutual Safety Award for Excellence for the past three years. To help make the students even more employable, Joe took the initiative to complete the necessary training that enables him to offer his students the 30-hour OSHA safety certificate, which is above and beyond the 10-hour certificate required.

“Joe also has served in leadership positions in both the Michigan Industrial and Technology Education Society and the Michigan Construction Teachers Association, as well as facilitating the local student chapter of the National Association of Homebuilders. He never misses an opportunity to promote construction trades and Habitat for Humanity. He showcases students’ work and the progress made on each Habitat house by hosting a daylong open house.”

This year’s open house for the Habitat home will take place from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on May 20 in the 10,000 square-foot Construction Trades Building at Dakota High School. The high school is located at 21051 21 Mile Road in Macomb.

Churches has been an educator for 27 years, the last 17 in his current position at Dakota High School. He earned two bachelor degrees from Central Michigan University: education and applied arts.

Excellence in Education award nominees are evaluated on the following criteria:

Excellence – Their work consistently helps students and/or their schools or school districts advance to higher levels of academic achievement.

Dedication – They consistently go above and beyond expectations to help students succeed.

Inspiration – Their work inspires others around them to exceed expectations either academically or professionally.

Leadership – They demonstrate clear leadership skills in their positions with their school or school districts

Effectiveness – The nominee’s work has clear and positive results on the educational advancement of students within the school or school district.