



BRENDA GORSUCH, MJE

2013 NATIONAL YEARBOOK

ADVISER OF THE YEAR

ADVISER TO *WESTWIND*, WEST HENDERSON HS, HENDERSONVILLE NC

WHILE BRENDA GORSUCH AND HER JOURNALISM STUDENTS HAVE TRAVELED NATIONWIDE IN THE NAME OF SCHOLASTIC JOURNALISM, THERE'S A DECIDEDLY "LOCAL" FLAVOR TO THIS STORY. THE NEW YEARBOOK ADVISER OF THE YEAR BEGAN JOURNALISM CAREER BEGAN AT EAST HENDERSON HS IN EAST FLAT ROCK, NC. SHE WAS IN YEARBOOK FOR TWO YEARS AND SERVED AS EDITOR IN CHIEF BEFORE CHOOSING A JOURNALISM MAJOR AT WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.

After a brief stint at the Hendersonville (NC) *Times News*, Gorsuch began teaching at West Henderson HS, less than 10 miles away from her alma mater. She began advising the newspaper in 1983 and added her yearbook responsibilities six years later.

A member of North Carolina Scholastic Media Advisers Association, Southern Interscholastic Press Association, Journalism Education Association, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, National Scholastic Press Association, Quill and Scroll Journalism Honor Society, Gorsuch has served in an array of capacities at the state, regional and national levels.

In fact, according to H.L. Hall, for whom the Yearbook Adviser of the Year award is now named, and Kelly Furnas, executive director of the Journalism Education Association, that participation at all levels and the obvious respect of the organizations is a mark of Gorsuch's contributions. Neither could remember another YAOY presentation that representatives of so many associations had travelled to attend.

The surprise announcement was enhanced by guests who were on hand for the after-school faculty meeting. Every principal who had led the faculty during Gorsuch's 31 years on campus was present. In addition to her family, a number of her students and several Herff Jones friends were also present. Because so many of them are involved with West's journalism program for all four years of high school, Gorsuch and her staffs get close.

"It was great to have this year's staff right there," said Gorsuch. "And I loved hearing from so many alums following the announcement." One of the messages that made her smile was from her 1997 *Westwind* EIC who told her that he thinks of her often and confessed that "Gorsuch" is his password for everything.

The ownership the students feel is evidence of her core beliefs about yearbook. "Publications courses are the only ones that really teach all 21st century skills. Other classes might include several of the skills, but yearbook includes them all from collaboration, communication and creativity to technology, project management and business...and then the students produce a permanent, public product to prove that the learning took place. No standardized test does that."

Gorsuch still remembers the advice she received as a younger adviser. "It has to be the students' book," she said. "You're there, but they need to know it's theirs." She's added a twist for advisers she mentors. "Don't be afraid to let them take risks," she tells them. "The creativity and power they have can be unleashed when they are encouraged to go beyond the standards to push the envelope and/or raise the bar."

The award-winning *Westwind* is evidence that her advice is sound.





MEGHAN PERCIVAL, CJE

DISTINGUISHED ADVISER

ADVISER TO *THE CLAN*, McLEAN (VA) HS

MEGHAN PERCIVAL FIRST LOVED BEING IN THE YEARBOOK ROOM AT JEFFERSON HS IN BLOOMINGTON, MN. SHE WAS A THREE-YEAR STAFFER, WHO BECAME EIC BEFORE HEADING OFF TO COLLEGE AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON, D.C. WHERE SHE ROWED AND MAJORED IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION.

When she landed a job at McLean (VA) HS 15 years ago, she was hired strictly as a history teacher and that was fine – for a couple of months. “I was hoping to get involved again,” she explained. And her wishes came true; before the year ended, she’d been recruited back into the world of yearbook. The adviser who was retiring “pre-selected” her successor and Percival willingly jumped right back in. Beginning with that first summer workshop, Percival was glad to be involved again. “I love seeing how every kid can find their thing and be successful in yearbook,” she said. “Some are great at design or photography and others love to report, edit or motivate, but there’s something for absolutely everyone.”

The Clan staff travels to conventions coast to coast and has attended workshops in Virginia, New York and Pennsylvania. Plus, Percival ventures to additional workshops. She’s also been on faculty at workshops in Florida, Arizona, Colorado and Minnesota. The national JEA/NSPA convention has been in D.C. several times since Percival started advising. That has allowed her to be involved on the local committee twice. In 2009, she was the local write-off co-chair

and next fall, she’s in charge of Break With a Pro, a Friday event where students meet with media professionals to learn more about careers.

According to Percival, the best yearbooks are all about great storytelling. “That happens with words, with pictures and through amazing coverage,” she explained. “I love that yearbook kids know so much about their schools and all of the people who make a difference.”

One of the pieces of advice she heard a lot as a new adviser was not to be afraid to ask questions, because the experienced advisers out there are willing to help. “So true,” she laughs. “I’ve made so many adviser friends at workshops and conventions. The yearbook community continues to inspire and teach me, no matter where we are.”

What does she tell new advisers? “Everything that works in other classes – and in life – applies in yearbook. Though many aspects of the class are different than for other courses, so much is the same. You need to have a plan, make it fun, provide opportunities for success and remember your audience.” Those are the same things that her high school adviser impressed upon her when she was learning about leading her peers through the process.

Percival was previously named a Special Recognition Adviser; she won that honor in 2010 and *The Clan* has been honored in NSPA’s Pacemaker and Best of Show competitions, CSPA’s Crown awards and has received Virginia High School League’s Trophy Class honors.



JED PALMER

DISTINGUISHED ADVISER

ADVISER TO *EAGLE EYE VIEW*, SIERRA MS, PARKER CO

JED PALMER CONTENDS THAT MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARBOOKS (AND YEARBOOK STAFFERS) DESERVE MORE OPPORTUNITIES AND RESPECT. AND HE IS WILLING TO WORK FOR THAT CAUSE. THE ADVISER AT SIERRA MS FOR THE LAST 12 YEARS, PALMER HAS FOUND GREAT VALUE IN BOTH STATE AND NATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND HE HAS ENCOURAGED OTHER MIDDLE SCHOOL ADVISERS TO BECOME INVOLVED AS WELL.

After attending his first JEA/NSPA convention when Denver hosted in 2007, he's been a regular – travelling coast to coast attending conventions in Philadelphia, D. C. and Boston; Seattle, San Francisco and Anaheim; and Kansas City, San Antonio and Minneapolis among other cities. He presents sessions, meets with other advisers, and has been there with his students to collect lots of plaques and trophies. The delegation from Sierra usually averages 20 students, accompanied by several parent chaperones who agree that the *Eagle Eye View's* staff travel to conventions is an important part of the yearbook program.

Many state press associations do not present many opportunities for middle school staffs. Palmer has worked with the board of the Colorado HS Press Association to open membership to middle schools and then he volunteered to serve as coordinator of the strand, creating middle school-specific programming and competitions.

While this might seem like an unusual path for an Elementary Education major, Palmer's history as a student journalist himself adds to the picture. After working on his middle school yearbook, high school lit mag and college newspaper, he was living proof of the real-life lessons publications students learn. "Everything we do in yearbook is reality," said the middle school math and computer science teacher. "The skills are beneficial in most arena and can be used in many different careers."

"I love being able to sit back and watch a group of students work together successfully," Palmer continued. "But my favorite time in yearbook is opening the boxes when the books are delivered and witnessing the students' sense of accomplishment. The pride they take in handing their book to their friends makes me smile even more."

When talking with newer advisers, Palmer is quick to point out the importance of the students' ideas. "Don't be afraid to listen to your students," he often says. "Their voice is so important and they knew the school better than anyone. Given the time and opportunity to express themselves, they will make such impact."

He is also quick to point out that advisers are never done learning about yearbook. "There's always something new," He commented. "And the community of yearbook advisers is incredible – so passionate and willing to share."

Palmer is CHSPA's current Yearbook Adviser of the Year and the *Eagle Eye View* has been winning NSPA, CSPA and CHSPA honors for years.





ERINN HARRIS, CJE

SPECIAL RECOGNITION ADVISER

ADVISER TO *TECHNIQUES*, THOMAS JEFFERSON HS FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, ALEXANDRIA VA

BEFORE SHE EVEN STARTED ADVISING, ERINN HARRIS HAD SIX YEARS OF YEARBOOK UNDER HER BELT. HER OBSESSION WITH TELLING STORIES AND SAVING MEMORIES FOR THE ENTIRE SCHOOL BEGAN IN MIDDLE SCHOOL. BECAUSE FRESHMEN WEREN'T ALLOWED TO TAKE YEARBOOK AT SOUTH MECKLENBURG HS IN CHARLOTTE, NC, SHE TOOK A YEAR OFF BUT THEN SHE WAS RIGHT BACK AT IT AS A SOPHOMORE AND SHE WORKED HER WAY THROUGH UP THE EDITORIAL LADDER, BECOMING EDITOR IN CHIEF AS A SENIOR.

From there, she went to Wake Forest, where she was on staff for two years, serving as Greeks editor before personnel issues on staff led her to believe that her time was better spent in other ways.

Harris graduated and became an English teacher at RE Lee HS in Springfield, VA. At first, her schedule was strictly English, but after two years, Harris returned to her roots and became the yearbook adviser there. She and her staff followed the advice she now gives new advisers, attending workshops and conventions to learn as much as possible. After a couple of years, she accepted a job at nearby TJHSST. Once again, she began with an all-English schedule, but she became the yearbook adviser the following year. Four years later, she advises the newspaper, the online site and the broadcast students as well.

And when classes end for the summer, she's off to teach at workshops in Pennsylvania and Colorado before the Virginia workshop her students attend. Her favorite aspects of yearbook to teach? "I love coverage," she said. "And I geek out about thematic word play. There is nothing like an amazing visual/verbal connection."

Really, it's the assignment itself that makes her tick. "The staffs know they are making a real product for an external audience. It's not just an essay that they are writing for me," she explained. "It's the book that captures the year. I know everyone says that if something – or someone – is not in the yearbook, in five years it will be as if they did not exist, but it's true. It'll be like it never happened! The students are making a book that people refer back to for many years to come. People want the yearbook; it's all of the school's memories of the year."

While the responsibilities of yearbook are many, Harris knows it's important that her staffs have fun on staff as well. "It's really important to find a balance between making the yearbook a room where people want to be and one where serious work gets done," she said. That way, she says, the staff can make sure that the big stories of the year get recorded and there's plenty of opportunity to find and tell the little stories that no one else is telling.

Harris was a JEA Rising Star in 2010, and both the *Shield* yearbook at Lee HS and *Techniques* from TJHSST have collected state honors as well as Pacemaker nods, Crowns and Best of show recognition as well as Trophy Class honors from Virginia High School League.



NICOLE WILSON LAUGHREY, MJE

SPECIAL RECOGNITION ADVISER



ADVISER TO *PINNACLE*, CARMEL (IN) HS

NICOLE WILSON LAUGHREY HAS ACCOMPLISHED MORE IN HER SIX YEARS AS A YEARBOOK ADVISER AT CARMEL (IN) HS THAN MANY ADVISERS DO IN THEIR ENTIRE CAREERS. SHE LANDED AT CARMEL WITH LOTS OF EXPERIENCE UNDER HER BELT. A MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARBOOKER WHO BECAME A NEWSPAPER EIC IN HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE HEADING TO BALL STATE TO MAJOR IN JOURNALISM, LAUGHREY FLOATED BETWEEN MAJORS IN EDITORIAL NEWS, GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PUBLIC RELATIONS BEFORE SHE ULTIMATELY GRADUATED WITH A DEGREE IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS.

She added an English credential and advised newspaper her first year teaching. Then she moved on to Carmel to advise the yearbook. Four advisers (newspaper, yearbook, radio and TV) comprise an independent communications department. Laughrey's teaching assignments, in addition to the intro course leading to yearbook and the production course, have included mass media, beginning photojournalism, advanced photojournalism and the occasional English class.

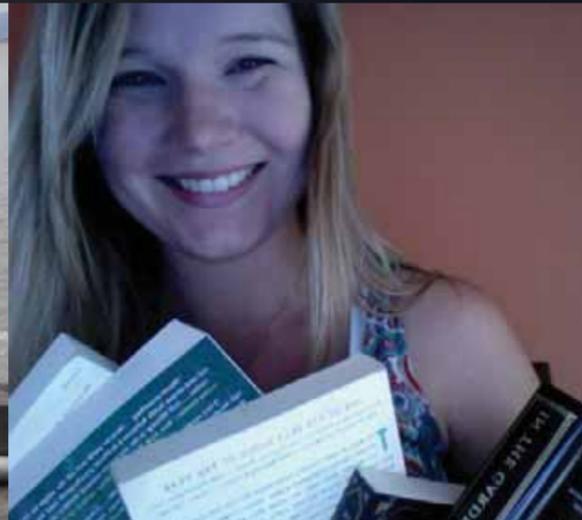
"I couldn't teach and not advise," said Laughrey. "I love to watch the kids grow. I have most of them for several years. And we don't teach just one skill. The fact that the class is expected to master so many skills makes it a more valuable experience – even for those who don't major in journalism, because those skills are transferable," she continued.

Of course, it's beneficial to be a better writer, a great team player, someone who understands deadlines and can multi-task. That's true no matter what you want to do." Laughrey's contributions to scholastic journalism are not limited to her work on campus. She has been active with the Indiana High School Press Association since she began teaching. She first ran for and was elected to an at-large position on the board, and then she ran for an executive board position in the next election. After serving as both secretary and vice president, she became the president of the IHSPA, a role she held through this fall.

In addition, she has been a consistent attendee, judge, presenter and committee member at the national JEA/NSPA scholastic journalism conventions. Her participation at the state and national levels earned her JEA's Rising Star Award in 2011.

Despite the value she places on learning experiences that allow her and her students to meet with and learn from others, her favorite part of the yearbook process occurs right at school. "It's distribution, hands down," she explained. "It's rewarding for everyone. There's nothing like the staffers seeing their work and then sharing it with the entire school."

One of the best lessons she learned as an adviser came from the newspaper adviser in her own department. "Jim (Striesel, the current Dow Jones Journalism Teacher of the Year) said that you need to figure out when to turn it off," she said. "That I needed to remember there was more in my life than being an adviser." That said, Laughrey knows how generous her colleagues from coast to coast are. "I tell new advisers not to be afraid to ask questions or seek help," she said. "The more adviser resources you have, the better off you'll be. And journalism teachers are known for their willingness to help their peers."





JEA

RISING STAR

MELISSA LARSON
YEARBOOK AND ONLINE NEWSPAPER ADVISER,
MESA MS, CASTLE ROCK CO

Amazing publications are a natural byproduct of Melissa Larson's Multimedia Productions and Digital Media classes. Though she was not a publications staffer in high school herself, she has discovered her passion for publications in her six years as an adviser. For Melissa summers offer additional journalism opportunities; she has been an ASNE Reynolds Fellow and she is associated with the Washington Journalism and Media Conference at George Mason University.

“For me, yearbook is pushing students to create a great record of the year, seeing them learn and grow, and then seeing their faces when they see their book for the first time.”

“My favorite part of advising is making meaningful connections with students. Pubs are unlike other classes, instead of leading my classes I get to help them figure out how to lead. You see a lot of growth in two years.”

NATALIE NIEMEYER
YEARBOOK AND NEWSPAPER ADVISER,
DES MOINES (IA) EAST HS

Three seems to be a key number for Natalie Niemeyer. This is her third year advising and she was in yearbook and newspaper for three years each at Cedar Rapids (IA) Jefferson HS, where she edited the yearbook both her junior and senior years. Plus, she has three teaching assignments: yearbook, newspaper and intro to journalism.