



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lynne Russo, (818) 903-6079, lynneerusso@gmail.com

Boosting STEM scores and emotional learning earns teacher Erin Wyatt a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

Maryland educator uplifts and mentors eighth graders at North Harford Middle School in Pylesville

SANTA MONICA, Calif., (Oct. 2, 2019) Every morning, teacher Erin Wyatt shows her eighth-grade students what's in store, literally, by having some of her students help run the school store at North Harford Middle School in Pylesville, MD. With her hands-on mentoring and pragmatic, down-to-earth approach, Wyatt ties social and emotional learning to academics with impressive results. Wyatt is boosting STEM scores, empowering young women and stitching together the social fabric in her rural community — while lifting students at all academic levels.

Yet it was Wyatt getting a big lift at a surprise school assembly where she was presented with a Milken Educator Award by Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley and Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Karen Salmon. An elated Wyatt was named a 2019-20 recipient of the national recognition, which comes with an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize. She is the only Milken Educator Award winner from Maryland this year, and is among up to 40 honorees for 2019-20.

The Milken Educator Awards, hailed by *Teacher* magazine as the “Oscars of Teaching” has been opening minds and shaping futures for over 30 years. Research shows teacher quality is the driving in-school factor behind student growth and achievement. The initiative not only aims to reward great teachers, but to celebrate, elevate and activate those innovators in the classroom who are guiding America’s next generation of leaders. Milken Educators believe, “*The future belongs to the educated.*”

Wyatt is bringing that future closer with a personal touch and true dedication to science education and her students’ needs, getting to know each one individually. Committed to community outreach, curriculum enhancements and staff development, Wyatt is a favorite with parents as well as the new teachers she mentors. She's also a magnet for appreciative former students who return often to visit this influential teacher.

"Erin Wyatt embodies the dedication and commitment that it takes to motivate and develop students," said Foley. "STEM education is essential to improving student outcomes and future success, and Erin delivers in this key arena of knowledge with a personal touch, institutional savvy and emotional connection to the community. We are thrilled to welcome her to our Milken Educator Network."

“Erin Wyatt exemplified the innovation, enthusiasm, and dedication of teachers throughout Maryland,” said Salmon. “We are committed to equity and excellence in our schools, and she is a living example of both of these principles in action. Teachers like Erin Wyatt are changing young people’s lives and making a difference. We are proud that she has been honored in this way.”

“We are so proud to have Erin recognized by the Milken Foundation and especially honored as a school system to have the only Maryland recipient this year,” said Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools Dr. Sean Bulson. “It is not easy to do what teachers do every day; Erin is a shining example of all the ‘extra’ qualities that we look for in an educator. It is my pleasure to be a part of this well-deserved surprise.”

About Milken Educator Erin Wyatt

Every morning, instead of leading a traditional homeroom at North Harford Middle School in Pylesville, Maryland, eighth-grade science teacher Erin Wyatt helps a group of female students run the school store. The girls are part of Wyatt’s mentoring program, one she created based on a similar effort at her church to provide young women with strong role models. Members of the “Girls Club” are thriving, with higher grades, better attendance and fewer behavior referrals. Wyatt prioritizes students’ social and emotional learning along with academics: She helped develop and piloted “Unify Harford,” a curriculum with lessons on tolerance, diversity, citizenship and cultural and community awareness. The program expanded from her classroom to the grade level, and the school district plans to use it throughout Harford County Schools.

The chair of North Harford’s science department, Wyatt is known as an innovative and exceptional educator who meets all students at their level of readiness and accepts them for who they are. She works with students at every academic level, from the gifted to challenged students on Individualized Education Programs. North Harford ranks fourth or fifth overall among the district’s middle schools, but its eighth-grade science scores land first or second. Wyatt’s students regularly surpass 80% on high-stakes testing. An African-American teacher in a district with limited ethnic diversity, Wyatt serves as a powerful role model for female, minority and STEM-focused students. Her pupils have earned first place in the school’s science fair, and Wyatt often arranges field trips to meet with scientists working in a variety of STEM fields.

Wyatt is known for her ability to form deep relationships with students and takes the time to get to know every student. Former students check in with her long after they have left for high school, and Wyatt keeps parents involved in their children’s learning process. She serves as a mentor for new and struggling teachers, who often visit her classroom to observe her pedagogical methods, classroom management and student-motivation techniques. Wyatt has served on North Harford’s curriculum and grading committees and is on the team implementing the school’s new restorative practices. She sponsors several building-wide spirit activities, providing positive experiences in a rural community where after-school programs can be hard to find. Every spring, Wyatt produces a movie featuring highlights from the school year, a beloved tradition that students and staff watch over and over.

Wyatt earned a bachelor's in biology from Delaware State University in 2007 and a master's in K-8 science education from Walden University in 2010.

More information about Wyatt, plus links to photos and a video from today's assembly, can be found on the Milken Educator Awards website at <https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/erin-wyatt>.

Milken Educators are selected in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. In addition to the \$25,000 prize and public recognition, the honor includes membership in the National Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,700 top teachers, principals, and specialists dedicated to strengthening education.

In addition to participation in the Milken Educator Network, 2019-20 recipients will attend a Milken Educator Forum in Indianapolis from March 26-28, 2020 where they will network with their new colleagues and exchange ideas with state and federal leaders on the future of education. In addition, the Milken Educator Awards' "Why Not Us" program will pair each 2019-20 recipient with a veteran Milken Educator mentor to explore and prepare for expanded leadership roles that strengthen education practice and policy.

More than \$140 million in funding, including \$70 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall Awards initiative, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers. Many have gone on to earn advanced degrees and be placed in prominent posts and on state and national education committees.

The Awards alternate yearly between elementary and secondary educators. Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Award is completely unique: Educators cannot apply for this recognition and do not even know they are under consideration. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then are reviewed by blue ribbon panels appointed by state departments of education. Those most exceptional are recommended for the Award, with final selection made by the Milken Family Foundation.

The cash award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways; for instance, on their children's or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even on the adoption of children.

To get regular updates on the surprise Milken Educator Award events, follow and use the #MilkenAward hashtag on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Everyone is encouraged to watch the tour at www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards, www.twitter.com/milken, www.youtube.com/milkenaward and www.instagram.com/milkenfamilyfdn.

For more information, visit www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org or call MFF at (310) 570-4772.

About the Milken Educator Awards

The very first Milken Educator Awards were presented by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987. The Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists from around the country

who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish.

###