

TEACHER OF THE MONTH – SEPTEMBER 2015

Bryan Olsen, Stanwood High School

Nominated by: Robin Blackwood, Former Student

Mr. Olsen has been a positive force in my life. Every day when I walk into his class I feel valued and respected. Mr. Olsen creates an enthusiastic environment in which to learn. Under his wing I grew to love history so much that it became my favorite class; amidst a mundane day of boring busy-work I always had Olsen's class to look forward to where I knew I would be challenged and entertained. By the end of my junior year he honored me with the awarded title of "US History Student of the Year", which is still a moment I hold dear.

With Olsen's guidance I became a leader at Stanwood High School. Not only did he support my efforts in founding the Gay-Straight Alliance, which pioneered my potential for leadership - he helped me become a LINK Crew leader, which was a position I took seriously for two years in and outside of club mandatory duties. Olsen inspired me to not only "walk-the-walk" with LINK Crew but "talk-the-talk" by reaching out to underclassmen students and doing my best to be a positive force in their life the way Olsen is in mine.

It is true that Mr. Olsen values each and every one of his students and he made that very clear after the death of a fellow classmate. Olsen ensured that every single one of his students understood that he cares, and he makes this compassion evident every opportunity he can during class by inquiring about our weekends and time outside of school to better get to know us as people. Mr. Olsen is not only an extraordinarily talented teacher, but an outstandingly kind man.

It only seems fitting that after giving me the title of "US History Student of the Year" I return his kindness and validity with the title of "Teacher of the Year". I cannot think of a teacher who deserves this honor more than Bryan Olsen. He is truly a teacher I will remember fondly for decades to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin Blackwood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

Robin Blackwood
Stanwood High School Class of 2015

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Bryan Olsen, Stanwood High School

Nominated by: Ella Blackwood, Teacher and Parent

I would like to nominate Stanwood High School's Brian Olsen for teacher of the year, if not teacher of the decade. I write as a teaching colleague and as a parent.

Sometimes a colleague does something so extraordinary that it changes the way you teach forever. This year, on the day we learned that we had lost one of our students to suicide, Brian had to face a classroom with a painfully empty desk. He did something extraordinary. He went to each of his students, one by one, and told them exactly why he valued each of them. He had something different to say to each student. He wanted them to know how much he cares and he did it in a powerful way. I will never forget how much this meant to his students, and I aspire to be as compassionate and giving as Brian in my classroom.

Brian is one of the first teachers new SHS freshmen meet in his role as one of two Link Crew teachers. He greets the new freshmen with great energy and enthusiasm, which is echoed by the older students that he has helped train. Brian makes the beginning of school exciting and fun for new students; he helps the Link Crew students see their potential to make positive changes at SHS.

After school, you'll often see our Chess Team in his room. Again he brings his enthusiasm, support, and acceptance to a growing group of students. Some have been playing chess for years; others are brand new to the game. His reports of their triumphs and losses are broadcast in the announcements are hilarious as he makes chess sound as exciting as an adrenalin fueled sports broadcast.

Brian has also been my daughter's teacher for the past two years. She began his US History class with a groan—History was not her favorite class. She ended up as US History Student of the Year. That's the power of Brian Olsen!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ella Blackwood', written in a cursive style.

Ella Blackwood
SHS English Teacher