



# NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
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## Nebraska American Legion Names Their 2018 Teachers-of-the-Year

(Lincoln) June 25, 2018 – Each year the Nebraska American Legion names three outstanding teachers as Teacher-of-the-Year at the elementary, middle, and high school level at their annual Department Convention. The following teachers were selected as the recipients of the 2018 Teacher-of-the-Year awards:

### **Elementary School Teacher-of-the-Year – Dean Wellensiek**

Dean Wellensiek is the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade Music teacher and 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade Physical Education teacher at Johnson County Central Public Schools. Wellensiek is the sponsor for the middle school student council and takes an active role in planning and helping with the Veteran's Day program at the school. He ensures that his students sing at least one patriotic song a day during music and discuss the current events happening around the world. Wellensiek's son was wounded while serving in Iraq, and he attributes this to his desire to keep the youth in his class educated on the international affairs and to be proud of the country they live in.

### **Middle School Teacher-of-the-Year – Jeanette Palmer**

Jeanette Palmer is the 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish and Language Arts teacher at Johnson County Central Public Schools. Palmer's students participate in the Patriot's Pen VFW program and they also write letters of thanks and friendship to military members. During the week before Veteran's Day Palmer plans a lesson to highlight the sacrifice of veterans and has her students write an essay to display on the wall. Her thoughtfulness about the freedoms and sacrifices that veterans make came from losing an uncle at Pearl Harbor and the service of both her brother and sister in the Armed Forces. Palmer teaches her students that everyday is an honor to be an American and it is up to them to show their pride to everyone.

### **High School Teacher-of-the-Year – Gabe Stalder**

Gabe Stalder is the 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade History and Social Science teacher at Twin River Public Schools. Each year Stalder stresses to his junior students to apply for American Legion programs like Cornhusker Boys' and Girls' State and Junior Law Cadet. Stalder sends students to Nance County Government Day each year to educate his students on the importance of county government. Stalder assists with the Veteran's Day program at the school each year and instructs students on the correct folding of an American Flag. Stalder educates his students on the importance of patriotism and respect and encourages the students to apply it to their life.

Department Commander Jim Costello presented a plaque of recognition to each of these recipients at the Nebraska American Legion Department Convention held in Kearney June 22-24. He thanked them for their dedication to our country's youth and to our veterans. Family, friends, and American Legion Family members were in attendance to congratulate the recipients.

Since its inception in 1919, The American Legion has been a key advocate for veterans' benefits, patriotic American values, instilling values in young people through numerous programs, and a strong nation defense with focus on quality-of-life issues for those serving in today's armed forces.

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