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For Immediate Release:

Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation Presents Golden Apple Awards

The Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation announced the seventh annual Golden Apple Awards, recognizing individuals that are dedicated, inspiring, and making a difference in the Aberdeen School District. This year's honorees are Kim Aman, Jeremy Schutter and Mendy Jones. Each received \$500 and an engraved golden apple.

Kim Aman, Simmons Elementary School Principal, always puts students first. She addresses all students by name, and learns the names of new students within their first week of school. She has implemented many positive behavior plans, including growth mindset and restorative behavior practices. While encouraging staff members to focus on the social-emotional wellness of students, she provides calming chairs, fidgets, and countless strategies to help with self-regulation.

Not only is Aman creating a constructive environment for students, she promotes a caring atmosphere for staff members. She is always supportive, and will drop whatever she is doing to help out. Building relationships is important to Aman, so she uses icebreakers and group games whenever possible. Teachers can always find little treats in mailboxes for birthdays, holidays, and even just because. Sometimes, she will even surprise staff members with a snack from her "Woot Woot" cart.

Aman is an active member in our community, works closely with the school's PTA, and makes connections with local businesses. You may have seen her serving meals at the monthly Table of Plenty feast, or collaborating with the Salvation Army to serve lunch to families over the summer. Aman has also partnered with Northern State University, teaching education courses regarding best practices and pedagogy. She has presented at several teacher and administrative workshops throughout the state, sharing her expertise in the areas of writing, school climate, and early childhood.

Aman has made a difference in the lives of countless students, as well as staff members who work with her. Her positive, outgoing personality shines every day, and she always takes on new challenges with a smile on her face. Her passion for learning is evident by her many degrees and accolades. Aman deserves the Golden Apple award for being an outstanding role model for her students, staff, and fellow colleagues.

Jeremy Schutter, Central High School Band Instructor, goes above and beyond what is expected in his responsibilities by creating strong personal connections with each of his students. He does this by getting to know about students' lives outside of the classroom; other activities, interests, and family life are all topics of conversation that can be heard between this teacher and students on a regular basis. Another way Schutter exceeds the expectations of his responsibilities is by making his classes exciting to be in. He includes challenging materials in order to push students to higher levels, which keeps class from becoming boring because there are always more ways to improve.

Schutter's impact can be found outside of the classroom because many of the lessons he teaches are essential lessons for life in the real world. One of the main lessons he teaches is punctuality. The phrase, *To be early is to be on time, to be on time is to be late, and to be late is not to be,* is commonly said countless times throughout the school year. Other important life lessons he teaches in his classroom are a strong work-ethic and self-improvement. Schutter encourages every individual to focus on becoming one percent better every day, and also teaches the group to buy into what the group is working on. This means that everyone needs to truly give it their all for the work to be effective and successful.

Outside of his professional responsibilities, Schutter is a member of the Aberdeen Municipal Band, plays in the Northern State University concert band, and participates in the pit orchestra for many ACT musicals. As a member of Zion Lutheran Church, he sings in the choir and plays trombone for Special Music during church services. Beside his musical involvement in the community, he volunteers by serving as a Confirmation member for young church members, packing lunches for the Salvation Army Feed the Kids program, and helping with Table of Plenty, which serves community members free meals.

Overall, Schutter has inspired students to continue in the fields of music and education by creating an atmosphere that rewards students for being the best possible versions of themselves. By building strong connections with students, creating an exciting atmosphere in his classroom, teaching life lessons, and volunteering beyond music, Schutter has gone above and beyond in his efforts to make a positive impact on education and the community.

Being understanding, respectful, professional, supportive, and committed are all terms that come to mind when one thinks about excellence in the field of education. These are a few of the terms used to describe **Mendy Jones**, Special Education Coordinator.

Jones began her career by working in several school settings for at-risk students. While handling the extreme behavioral and academic challenges that come with teaching in that setting, she also worked to obtain her Master's Degree. While working in this setting, she built lifelong friendships with the employees but more importantly with the clients that she worked with. One client had so much respect and trust in Jones that, at a young age, asked her to be his payee. She agreed and assisted this student with managing his finances but what is more admirable is that she continues to do this today, over 20 years later.

When transitioning to the public schools, her caring, supportive, and enthusiastic demeanor was evident in Jones's daily interactions with her students. She was a huge advocate for her students and went above and beyond in helping them be academically and behaviorally successful. Her ability to connect with them along with her high classroom expectations created a welcoming environment where students felt safe in expressing their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings. Jones was a strong voice for her students who lacked the skills to

speak up and advocate for themselves. Her collaboration with parents, teachers, and administrators always put the student needs first.

Regardless of her extremely busy schedule, Jones will make time to assist staff whenever needed. She played an essential role in developing the Basic Classes at Central High School as she saw a need for more classes that would specifically fit the academic needs of students which improved the graduation rate of students with special needs. When we started seeing a need for more behavioral support for students, Jones proposed making a room where the students could go and process through their behavior instead of going straight to the office. The processing room has been very successful in lowering office referrals and suspensions. In an effort to assist families with making connections with adult service agencies, Jones started an adult service provider night at the high school. This allowed parents to meet many of the adult service providers and find out more about them all in one night.

Jones's giving nature doesn't end in the workplace. She has bought homecoming t-shirts, graduation tassels, paid for students to get into games or activities so they can have the same high school experiences as their peers. She has visited students in jail and written students in prison so they know they have someone in their corner and encouraging them to make good choices. She has gone to homes after hours to complete testing, get permission slips signed, and taken students shopping to get necessities such as coats. Jones serves on the Mayor's Advisory Committee that assists with the acceptance and integration of people with disabilities in our community. She also serves on the SAT, SNT, and the RDA committees throughout the school district and was a CPI staff trainer for many years.

The Golden Apple awards are a special project of the Aberdeen Public Schools Foundation. Visit www.AberdeenPublicSchoolsFoundation.org for more information. The Aberdeen Public Schools foundation promotes excellence in education by forging a partnership among the schools, community, and alumni.

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Attached photo – Jeremy Schutter, Mendy Jones and Kim Aman receive their Golden Apple Awards on January 3, 2023 at Aberdeen Central High School.