

Classified Employee of the Year

Rhonda Christian a multi-dimensional performer

Like many in education, Rhonda Christian's official title – library/media specialist – only scratches the surface of what she does at Jenkins Junior/Senior High School in Chewelah.

Officially, her job is about numbers: Manage a library collection of 15,000 individual items, plus digital/electronic resources, for 420 students conducting research.



Rhonda Christian, Chewelah's difference maker

Then there is the "other duties as assigned" category. For Christian, it is an extensive list.

She directs the Link Crew, co-chairs the Renaissance program, manages the Student of the Month award, tutors in the after-school program, heads up the school blood drive, organizes fund-raisers, runs the clock at football games and even makes the popcorn at Jenkins basketball games (reportedly the best-tasting 'corn in the Northeast A League; visiting teams agree).

So, if library/media specialist doesn't really convey the full breadth of her job, what should we call such a talented, multi-dimensional performer?

How about regional Classified Employee of the Year.

Christian was awarded that title in March following a regional competition open to every full-time classified employee in the seven-county NEWESD 101 region.

Friends and colleagues agree it is a well-deserved honor. Jenkins Principal Shawn Anderson says he is particularly grateful for Christian's work with the Renaissance Program, recognizing students for academic success and improvement.

Students achieving a 3.0 grade point average or .5 GPA improvement are formally recognized by the school and awarded gifts from local merchants (of course, arranged by Christian).

More than an academic mentor, she also is a living example of what is possible when a determined person sets his/her mind to a lofty goal. While Christian is a college

graduate, she was not a traditional student who started at 18 and graduated four years later.

Rather, she went back to school as an adult, earning an online degree from Ashford University in Iowa. It was a hard road, working full-time and studying at night. But, in the end, it was a satisfying journey leading to a Bachelor of Arts degree.

You can do it too, she tells students. Whether the goal is a two-year or four-year degree, trade school or industry certification, perseverance is the key to success.

Christian's ties to community run deep. She is a Jenkins graduate who returned to the district fold as paraprofessional at Gess Elementary in 1995. Five years later, she moved to her current position at the high school.

Colleagues and students at both schools have long called her a difference-maker who inspires and motivates all around her. Her high energy and enthusiasm are indeed contagious.

Now she also can be called the 2017 Classified Employee of the Year. The title fits her well.



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