

Support Staff Member of the Month

Barrie Elementary School

Mrs. Mahna Grossman

To the School District of Fort Atkinson Board of Education, Dr. Fitzpatrick, Mrs. Oakley, Mr. Peterson, Mr. Demerath, I consider it a tremendous honor to present to you the October Support Staff Member of the Month. Often times in our world we can so often keep a keen focus on the problems that need to be solved, and it is a refreshing exercise to reflect on the many good people we have the privilege of working with on a day-to-day basis. I have the great opportunity to introduce to you one of those people that just simply make you feel better after you talk with them. I present to you Mrs. Mahna Grossman!

Mrs. Grossman has been an employee of the school district for the past 17 years as a Special Education Aide. Her first year she was hired by Mr. Jeff Zaspel who at that time was the Principal at Rockwell Elementary School, and in the following year Mrs. Grossman traveled just down the road to Barrie Elementary to serve as a Special Education Aide for Sue Bradley and Kelly Ramirez. Dr. Zaspel – you have made some great hires in your career – and Mrs. Grossman is certainly one of them! The past 16 years has brought many memories for Mrs. Grossman – most of them good! Mrs. Grossman on a daily basis rolls up her sleeves and works with some of our most challenging students – BUT as she would tell you – some of the neatest boys and girls you would ever meet! There is never been a day that I have not seen a positive spirit and smile on Mrs. Grossman's face. Mrs. Grossman on a daily basis will help a student de-escalate from a situation while she eats lunch with them, she will take a student or group of students and work with them on their reading, writing or math. Mrs. Grossman will stand out in two degree weather and make sure her students are interacting socially in an appropriate manner and not throwing snowballs. Mrs. Grossman will walk the hallways with students just talking with them to bring their focus back to their number one job – learning! Mrs. Grossman holds the respect and high regard of the entire Barrie community. This fall Mrs. Grossman was nominated by her long-time colleague and friend, Sue Bradley, for the Support Staff Award for Excellence in Education. Here is a bit of what Mrs. Bradley wrote:

"It has been a privilege and a blessing to have worked side-by-side with Mahna Grossman for the past 15 years in our classroom for students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities at Barrie Elementary School. Mrs. Grossman has always acted in a very professional manner while being a caring, calm influence in this room. She has stood by me, aiding me through some really tough situations with students (and parents)... Mrs. Grossman is the epitome of calm in a sometimes chaotic atmosphere. She has been kicked, pushed, hit, bit, spit at and pinched at one time or another...However, she has never complained or held it against the student involved, and always comes back with a positive attitude. She is able to give students a fresh start on a daily and sometimes, even hourly, basis. She is very patient with students and really looks out for our students, giving them social cues and reminders of how they are expected to act."

Mrs. Grossman also sees her role as one outside of the classroom as you will see her at a multitude of Barrie activities and social functions. Mrs. Grossman is a problem solver with her students, with parents, with other teachers and administrators. All in all, Mrs. Grossman is one of the key people at Barrie that help define our learning community!

Mrs. Grossman has been married to her husband, Gary, for 33 years. Gary and Mahna have two children who graduated from Fort Atkinson High School: Ben (Class of 2000) and Becky (Class of 2003). While raising her children and working full time, Mrs. Grossman spent 15 years as a coach for Odyssey of the Mind in which several teams advanced to State competitions and one advanced to the World level competition. You probably would not be able to tell, but she is a very proud grandmother to her namesake granddaughter Madilyn Mahna! In the times that Mahna and Sue can catch a cup of coffee they sure do enjoy sharing some of their grandchildren stories!

If you ever have the chance to sit down and have a conversation with Mahna I would greatly encourage you to do so. You will not regret the time spent doing so. In closing, I find it best to quote Mrs. Bradley one more time, "Mrs. Grossman is definitely an asset to the School District of Fort Atkinson. I don't know how I'd function without her by my side, and I hope I do not ever have to find out!" I couldn't say it better!

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in congratulating Mrs. Mahna Grossman for the October Support Staff Member of the Month!