STRIKE UP THE BAND AND CELEBRATE!
ST. JOHNS MUSIC/BAND TEACHER NAMED A TEACHER OF THE YEAR FINALIST AND RECEIVES $15,000 FROM MACY’S AND THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION!

Macy’s partners with Florida Department of Education to celebrate extraordinary teacher with surprise, magical announcement as one of five finalists named to compete for distinguished 2017 Macy’s/Florida Department of Education Teacher of the Year Award

MIAMI, FL – May 6, 2016 – It’s tough to go to class on a Friday! Like any other end to the school week, Laurie Zentz had her band class engaged and focused on the lesson plans for the day. She and her students had no idea that she was about to receive the surprise of a lifetime! From a group of 72 teachers, Laurie Zentz of Switzerland Point Middle School in St. Johns County was chosen as one of five finalists to compete for the 2017 Macy’s/Florida Department of Education Teacher of the Year Award!

For the past 28 years, Macy's, along with the Florida Department of Education, has honored the most exceptional educators in Florida who make magic in and out of their classrooms every day. The Teacher of the Year program recognizes and honors the contributions of outstanding classroom teachers who have demonstrated a superior capacity to inspire a love of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities.

At 9:30 a.m., Florida Department of Education Commissioner, Pam Stewart, along with Paul Imbrone, Macy’s vice president of Government and Public Affairs, was on hand to make the big surprise announcement. The sixth through eighth grade Music/Band teacher was instructing her class when the Commissioner made the surprise visit and told her that she had been chosen as one of five finalists for the prestigious honor.

“Congratulations to Laurie Zentz for being named a finalist for this prestigious award. Her dedication and commitment to her students is testament to the hard work educators do every day in classrooms to strengthen the future of the state of Florida,” said Dennis Witte, Macy’s executive vice president and regional director of stores.

Upon receiving the good news, Laurie Zentz was presented with a $15,000 check from the Florida Department of Education and Macy's, and a $500 Macy’s gift card. A $1,000, check funded by Macy’s, was presented to the finalist’s school. Macy’s will contribute more than $100,000 in cash to the state-run Teacher of the Year program, as it has done since 1988. This year, Governor Rick Scott secured additional state funds for teachers in the Teacher of the Year program to significantly increase these awards for Florida educators.

“Macy’s has been presenting these awards for almost 30 years because we know that exceptional teachers are one of the most important factors of our students’ learning and success. That’s one reason why we’re proud of our long-standing commitment to education in Florida,” continued Witte. “To be a teacher is to be a
‘change agent.’ It is a dynamic profession that promotes lifelong learning. This comes to life in Ms. Zentz’s classroom, where students are engaged as well as innovation and achievement rise. The Teacher of the Year program gives us the opportunity to honor the best educators in the state, as well as motivate teachers to strive for excellence in their own communities.”

“In the case of Mrs. Zentz, the numbers certainly do not lie,” said Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart. “In just five years, she has quadrupled the size of Switzerland Point Middle School’s band, making it the largest of its kind. Her passion for her students and the teaching profession as a whole shines through as she enables her students to work toward excellence each and every day, and I commend her for making her students the top priority.”

The winner of the 2017 Macy’s/Florida Department of Education Teacher of the Year award will be announced during a ceremony on Thursday, July 14, 2016. The event, hosted by Emmy Award-winning journalist Deborah Norville, will be held at Orlando’s Hard Rock Live at Universal Studios CityWalk.

In addition to a $20,000 award funded by Macy’s and the Department of Education, the Teacher of the Year will receive awards from Macy’s including an all-expense paid trip for four to New York City to attend the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. The winner will also serve for one year as the Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education, touring the state to spread the word about educational opportunities and challenges in the Sunshine State. To date, Macy’s has contributed almost $3 million to teachers throughout the state.

During the gala event in July, each of the remaining nominees will be presented with a $10,000 personal cash award from the Department of Education and Macy’s.

This year’s five finalists were chosen from more than 194,519 public school teachers throughout the state by a Department of Education-appointed selection committee representing teachers, principals, parents and the business community. Each finalist is selected on the basis of outstanding ability to teach and communicate knowledge of the subject taught, professional development, philosophy of teaching, and outstanding school and community service.

About Macy’s
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