

Andover Townsman

Anderson School educator wins statewide Excellence in Teaching Award

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A special educator at the Anderson School has been given the Massachusetts Associate of Approved Special Education Schools (MAAPS) award for excellence in teaching.

Rhonda Boudreau, a resident of Tewksbury, was honored during a ceremony on May 26 that coincided with her 55th birthday. She works as a special educator for students with severe disabilities at the Anderson School in Andover.

“During a time of pandemic and disruption that has been so challenging for schools and educators of all kinds, Rhonda epitomizes the very best examples of the devotion, energy, and love that thousands of teachers and staff at member schools bring to their students and their work every day,” said Elizabeth Dello Russo Becker, executive director of MAAPS, according to a press release from the Professional Center for Child Development.

Boudreau, who has an adult child with developmental disabilities, said she chose her career because she wants to change how people see children with disabilities.

“I love seeing these kids. I see what I wanted people to see with my son. These children are much more complex than my son. But I want people to see what I see and I knew by teaching I could find more ways to do that,” said Boudreau. “There is so much big personalities, and intelligence and excitement to these kids.”

PCCD’s Anderson School Director, Deanne Cefalo praised Boudreau’s “integrity, compassion, teamwork, talent, and dedication to her students,” specifically citing the work she did during the move to online classes and the support she lent her colleagues during the pandemic.

Multiple parents also praised Ms. Boudreau, saying in submitted letters that she brings out the greatest “potential of her students.” and that they feel safe leaving their children in her hands because she “takes my place as mama and teacher while my daughter is at school.”

While Boudreau said one of the hardest parts of her job is when students graduate out of her classroom, it is also one of the best moments.

“It’s wonderful to see them move on to the bigger schools,” said Boudreau “That is the goal to see them go out into the world and see them the best that they can be.”

Boudreau said doesn’t just teach her students but develops unique curriculum for every student.

“Every kid needs something different and they need it taught differently,” said Boudreau.

A tactic of Boudreau’s is to use sensory details to teach students. An example of this is her use of cooking to teach math. While most of her students can’t eat the food, Boudreau said she uses the process of making food to teach.

“We are measuring, we are counting, we are smelling the ingredients. We are feeling the ingredients spread on their tray,” said Boudreau. “Whatever sense we can reach that work best for that child, we do that.”

Boudreau said her classroom size is usually around five or six, which allows her to develop a relationship with both her students and their families.

“You don’t just get the student, you get the whole family,” said Boudreau.

The May 26 ceremony also honored Grace Little, of Milestones Day School in Waltham and Henry Njoroge, of Boston Higashi School in Randolph, with Grace Little, of Milestones Day School in Waltham and Henry Njoroge, of Boston Higashi School in Randolph.



Chris Hunt, PCCD Executive Director saying a few words about Rhonda at the Awards Ceremony. Looking on is Deanne Cefalo, Anderson School Program Director.



Rhonda Boudreau reading with Anderson School Student.