

## NEWS

# 'I've never wanted to do anything else.' Meet Stark County's Teacher of the Year: Roberta Scott

**Jessica Holbrook** The Repository

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Roberta Scott always wanted to be a teacher.

As a kid in Barberton, she would convince her friends to set up a classroom in the basement and let her be the teacher. If they weren't cooperative, she would recruit her stuffed animals as students.

"I've never wanted to do anything else," said Scott, a 10th- and 11th-grade honors and AP English teacher at GlenOak High School in Plain Township. "I don't know what I would do if I couldn't teach."

Scott was named Stark County's Teacher of the Year this week as part of the Stark County Educational Service Center's 2021 Education Celebration.

**Education:** Plain Local, district library agree to new terms for Plain Community branch

**Canton schools:** Education roundup: Art, music educator of the year winners announced

**Higher education:** Want free money for college? Stark County education groups helping students complete the FAFSA

The celebration, typically held in person, was canceled by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Bobbi Scott is a rock in this district. She's compassionate, she's caring, and she does nothing but support the staff of GlenOak High School each and every day," Plain Local Superintendent Brent May said when announcing to staff that Scott had won the honor. "She's an ambassador to the teaching profession and to Plain Local Schools. Bobbi Scott is the perfect choice for this award."

Scott, 57, will retire at the end of this school year after a 35-year career as an English teacher, all with Plain Local Schools.

She credits her colleagues and students, who may drive her crazy but always find ways to keep her laughing, for keeping her in the classroom.

"It's the talking, the rapport, the laughing in the classroom," she said. "I think humor is really important, in any job but especially in teaching."

As a three-decade English teacher, Scott's taught plenty of books, but Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" and F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" are perennial favorites for both her and students.

Her favorite moments have been when the class really clicks with the book and the lesson.

"Those are the moments. Sometimes they're few and far between, but it's just really good when there's that connection and the kids are into it," she said. "That's what I've enjoyed the most."

Scott and her husband Greg live in Plain Township. They have two adult children. Outside of the classroom, Scott likes to walk and bike, and is looking forward to reading for fun during her retirement.

She urges new teachers to balance work and family, and pay attention to their own health and well-being. Teaching can be an intense job, she said.

Take care of yourself and your health, but enjoy what you're doing in the classroom," she said.

## Who won 'Lifetime Educator' award?

Teresa Purses was working at a grocery store just after college graduation when a former teacher approached her and urged her to talk to the secretary at the Stark County Educational Service Center.

That conversation led to a referral to a secretary at Minerva Local Schools. Which led to her first teaching job and a more than 35-year career in education in Stark.

This week, Purses, 67, now the president of the Stark Education Partnership, was named the 2021 Lifetime Educator.

"Dr. Purses has made a tremendous impact on Stark County education during her career. As a teacher, administrator, school superintendent, and president of the Stark Education Partnership, Teresa has worked tirelessly for our kids," Educational Service Center Superintendent Joe Chaddock said.

"A pioneer in the cradle to career movement, her impact on early childhood education cannot be overstated. Her influence on the college credit plus program has helped countless kids obtain college credit prior to high school graduation, vastly increasing their chances of successfully completing college."

She also has supported career technical training and programming, helped graduates find employment and worked with the Strengthening Stark Talent Development program, he said.

The award really belongs to the people who've helped her along the way, from students to custodians to secretaries to fellow educators and administrators, Purses said.

"God has just put people in my life, in my path, for me to grow and to connect," she said. "I've been so blessed by so many people."

Purses' career has taken her from teaching science in Minerva to being a school principal in the district to being superintendent and curriculum director at Canton Local Schools to an executive director role at Stark ESC to her position now at the Stark Education Partnership.

"I would say I have been so fortunate to have an opportunity to work in a career that's connected to my passion," she said. "When we get to do that — and for me, it's making a difference in the life chances of children and youth — when we get to do that, we're so fortunate and so blessed."

Purses and her husband Sam have a blended family of seven children and eight grandchildren. She's active in outreach missions at her church, Faith United Methodist Church in North Canton, and volunteers with the United Way of Greater Stark County and The Stark County Urban League.

Purses urges educators to work together. And to take time to refresh and rejuvenate, especially now. It's easy in service professions to give too much of yourself away, she said.

"Your role in our community is so vitally important. You pour into young people hopes and dreams and you help activate their potential," she said. "(Educators) need to make sure they take care of themselves because they are so important. They improve all other professions. They help young people know their potential."

## Other Stark County Winners

The Educational Service Center also honors "Rookies of the Year" (educators with less than three years teaching experience who display a passion for their students and use innovation in the classroom). They were:

Brenda Weisel, Alliance City.  
 Matt Fellows, Brown Local.  
 McKenzie Harder, Canton City.  
 Lauren Tsafarides, Canton Local.  
 Makenna Swiger, Carrollton Exempted Village.  
 Danielle Perich, Fairless Local.  
 Jill Terranova, Green Local.  
 Zach Michel, Jackson Local.  
 David Hohenadel, Lake Local.  
 Amanda Belz, Louisville City.  
 Siobhan Davis, Marlinton Local.  
 Nicole Stumpo, Massillon City.  
 Zach Gazdacko, Minerva Local.  
 Leah Bailey, North Canton City.  
 Natalie Sarbaugh, Northwest Local.  
 Felisa Markoski, Osnaburg Local.  
 Heather Brownsword, Parochial East.  
 Kayla Brent, Parochial West.  
 Sarah Branning, Perry Local.  
 Hannah Ferguson, Plain Local.  
 Chris Albrecht, R. G. Drage Career Technical Center.

Gara Westrich, Sandy Valley Local.  
Amber Moulin, Stark County Developmental Disabilities.  
Lauryn Osborne, Stark County Educational Service Center.  
Paige Martin, Strasburg-Franklin Local.  
Kristy Malloy, Tuslaw Local.

### **The district teachers of the year were:**

Carol Jesse, Alliance City.  
Tiffany Smith, Brown Local.  
Tricia Stanton, Canton City.  
Meagan Smith, Canton Local.  
Sue Incerpi, Carrollton Exempted Village.  
Mike Berg, Dalton Local.  
Natalie Gilkerson, Fairless Local.  
Barb Pursley, Green Local.  
Emma Lee Jarvis, Jackson Local.  
Katie Arthurs, Lake Local.  
Karen Warner-Andrews, Louisville City.  
Amy Kohmann, Marlinton Local.  
Geri Seifert, Massillon City.  
Brian Costea, Minerva Local.  
Taylor Sowers, North Canton City.  
Ashley Harper, Northwest Local.  
Jason Hall, Osnaburg Local.  
Maxwell McQueen, Parochial East.  
Molly Flory, Parochial West.  
Meredith South, Perry Local.  
Roberta Scott, Plain Local.  
Brad Richardson, R. G. Drage Career Technical Center.  
Syndi Kemp, Sandy Valley Local.  
Rebecca Shade, Stark Board of Developmental Disabilities.  
Mary Hilliard, Stark County Educational Service Center.  
Jessica Barkley, Strasburg-Franklin Local.  
Sarah Rippel, Tuslaw Local.

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