

# Local teacher nominated for national award

Childs honored for LifeChanger of the Year nomination at ISD meeting

By Robert Tomlinson  
 Staff Writer

CENTREVILLE — A special education teacher in St. Joseph County has been nominated for an award from a national non-profit organization.

Tammy Childs, a special education teacher at the Pathfinder Center in Centreville, is one of over 700 educators nationwide nominated for the 2019-20 National LifeChanger of the Year award, put on by the 170-year-old life insurance and annuity company National Life Group.

According to the National Life Group, the award, which has been given out annually since the 2011-12 academic year, “celebrates those who are making a significant difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence and leadership.” Any K-12 educator, teacher, administrator, or any member of a school’s staff are eligible to receive the award.

Childs’ nomination page states that she “moves mountains for her kids” and “changes lives every day.”

“She works with students who have unique challenges, such as limited speech or mobility, serious illnesses, seizures, etc.,” the nomination page stated. “Her students are loved for their differences, celebrated for their uniqueness, and provided the best



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 Pathfinder Center teacher Tammy Childs (right) was recognized for her nomination for the 2019-20 National LifeChanger of the Year award during Monday, Dec. 16’s St. Joseph County Intermediate School District Board of Education meeting. The special certificate recognizing her nomination was presented by Pathfinder principal Ben Oakley (left).

possible care and support from a dedicated team that loves them unconditionally.”

Childs’ nominator, who wished to remain anonymous, said on the nomination page the Pathfinder Center is “filled with LifeChangers,” and that Childs “will always be one of the best of the best.”

“They make a difference, leading by

example and getting the job done under sometimes the most heart-wrenching circumstances,” the nominator said. “In a building filled with great educators, Tammy will always be one of the best of the best. She is an inspiration, a role model, and a LifeChanger.”

Childs received special recognition for

her nomination during the St. Joseph County Intermediate School District’s Board of Education meeting on Monday, Dec. 16, presented to the board by Pathfinder Center Principal Ben Oakley, who said Childs is “a masterful special education teacher.”

During the presentation, many of Childs’ coworkers and peers talked about how Childs excels at what she does. Kristen Schmitt, an assistant teacher since 2018, said Childs embraced her and accepted her when she first started at the school.

“I have never met a teacher who loved her students as much as I’ve seen Tammy love her students,” Schmitt said. “She shows compassion every day, she has patience like a saint, and at the end of the day, she’s a good person. She’s a good influence in those kids’ lives. She changes their lives every day, and it’s not just them, it’s the people she works with. Anyone at Pathfinder can tell you that she’s changed our lives, too.”

Physical education teacher Trudy Camp said Childs is a “one of a kind” teacher.

“Tammy makes sure that every single kid in her classroom not only gets the care, but accesses the curriculum, just like any other elementary or junior high or senior high,” Camp said. “When I go in, I’m

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# FPPD receives new fire truck

By Robert Tomlinson  
 Staff Writer

FABIUS TOWNSHIP — A brand-new fire truck, made in southwest Michigan, was delivered to the Fabius-Park Fire Department Monday night.

The new rescue pumper, which was made by South Haven-based Spencer Manufacturing, was driven in to the fire department just after 7 p.m., with everyone at the fire department there to welcome it in.

Outgoing FPPD Fire Chief Mike Frye, who helped welcome the truck on his last day as chief before retiring, said the truck will be of good use to the fire department once it’s in service.

“It’s going to be our main truck for rescue calls, and it may also be the first truck out for fires,” Frye said.

Some of the special features of the truck, which Frye estimated cost around \$475,000, include pumping water at 1,500 gallons

per minute, a remote-operated deluge gun, and most of all, sufficient space for their rescue equipment.

“In the front bumper, we’ll have our battery-operated hydraulic rescue tools, like the Jaws of Life, and that’s going to be a big time-saver,” Frye said. “Most of all, we have plenty of cabinet space for all of our rescue tools, which right now we have them scattered everywhere, and we can consolidate everything on this truck.”

Frye said having everything consolidated will save the department time in emergency situations.

“It makes it a lot easier to operate, I think, depending on the situation, with less people. Like our battery-operated rescue tools, you can run up there, open the door, grab it and go,” Frye said. “With the old hydraulic tools, you had to have three people. You had to have somebody get the pump

out, somebody get the tools out, and somebody getting the hoses out. They had to get it all hooked up before they can use it. Now, they just walk to that front bumper, open the lid, they’re right there, and they’re ready to go.”

Because the truck was made an hour away in South Haven, Frye said servicing it would be easier to accomplish, compared to their other trucks, which were built in North Dakota.

The new truck will not be in full operation right away, however. Frye said there is still plenty of equipment and tool mounting to do before it is put in service, but when it’ll be put in service will be up to new fire chief Josh Judsen.

“It won’t be tomorrow, but it might have limited service within the next couple of weeks,” Frye said.

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COMMERCIAL-NEWS | ROBERT TOMLINSON

Firefighters at the Fabius-Park Fire Department welcomed their brand-new fire truck Monday. The new truck will be their new main truck for rescue calls and potentially fire calls once it’s officially in service.



PHOTO BY WILLIAM A. BALTZ

She’s fast and strong. Though Kathy has a demanding career, she makes time to teach several classes at HealthTrac, including Les Mills Body Pump and Body Flow.



Motto: Enjoy life and take nothing for granted.

“Everybody thinks I was always tiny,” says Kathy Griffin, after leading three hour-long classes at HealthTrac in a row—spin cycling, and Les Mills’ Body Pump and Body Flow. “At one point in my life, I had to buy size 16 pants. Now I wear a size 0 or 2. I threw away almost all the pictures of me during those times—unless my kids were in them.”

She ran her first full marathon at age 42. When she crossed the finish line at the Borgess Run in Kalamazoo on May 5, she completed her 40th marathon—and added two more this year.

“I can’t even tell you how many half marathons I’ve run because I used to run a lot more of those than full ones. I used to run four or five half marathons per year.”

All through Albion High School, Kathy played sports—

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## Profile: Kathy Griffin

By William A. Baltz  
 Special to the Commercial-News

Name: Kathy Griffin  
 Age: 56  
 Status: Married  
 Children: two adult children; three adult stepchildren; five step grandchildren  
 Occupation: Circuit/Probate Court Administrator  
 Avg. hours exercise per week: 20

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The Three Rivers DDA is putting on a Roaring 20s New Year’s Eve Extravaganza this year! Come ring in the New Year at the Riviera Theatre Bar’s outdoor viewing area to celebrate Three Rivers’ first-ever ball drop! DJ Bobbo, drink specials, hors d’oeuvres, and a champagne toast at midnight!

**RIVIERA THEATRE & BAR** — Upcoming Events

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