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*Belong To Something Special*

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## FREEDOM FEDERAL CREDIT UNION SELECTS THREE HARFORD COUNTY TEACHERS TO WIN GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS

*Winners were Honored at a Reception Held on June 22*



Freedom Federal Credit Union President and CEO, Mike MacPherson, awards prize money to 2018 Golden Apple Annual Education Award recipients (L to R): Jacob Bennett, Kathleen Ford, and Tara Recor.

**Bel Air, MD** –At a reception on Friday, June 22, Freedom Federal Credit Union honored Kathleen Ford, as the grand prize winner of the Credit Union’s 2018 Golden Apple Annual Educator Award competition. Ms. Ford, who is a music teacher at the John Archer School, won the top \$2,000 prize for her plan to better connect students with disabilities through music and song. The John Archer School is Harford County’s separate public day school serving students with severe and profound special needs, ages three through twenty-one.

Ms. Ford's submission detailed an inspirational vision for reaching students with differing abilities through the power of music. Part of the award will be used to purchase a complete set of *Music K-8* magazines and CDs, selected to allow older students with developmental delays to be more successful in chorus, while at the same time positioning John Archer School to become a central lending library for *Music K-8*.

Additionally, Ms. Ford has selected a variety of adapted instruments and aides for use with her class, school-wide assemblies, drama productions, and for teachers looking to incorporate music therapy into their lessons. Lastly, Ms. Ford, in collaboration with one of the school's speech language pathologists, Jen Cashour, is seeking to introduce a *Beamz Life Skills* device and software into her curriculum. This groundbreaking system uses "eye gaze" equipment to allow students with severe physical challenges to produce music independently, something they cannot physically do without the technology.

Freedom noted that, although a record number of submissions were received this year, it was Ms. Ford's thoughtfulness and creativity in considering how the award could affect positive change for her students, school, and community that made her application stand out from the rest.

Additionally, two other winners were selected in the competition: Jacob Bennett, Kindergarten Teacher at Havre de Grace Elementary, and Tara Recor, Gifted & Talented Resource Teacher at Prospect Mill and Halls Cross Roads Elementary schools. Both Mr. Bennett and Ms. Recor will receive \$500 each to fund initiatives at their respective schools.

At Havre de Grace Elementary, Mr. Bennett has started a beautification project that goes beyond landscaping and a fresh coat of paint. He works collaboratively with other staff and teachers to transform educational spaces into imaginative environments that offer students themed educational experiences. His own kindergarten classroom has already been meticulously transformed into an outer space retreat, and the hallways are filled with positive "be" statements all around the school, so that students are reminded daily to "be kind" "be creative" and "be relentless."

At a Title 1 school like Havre de Grace Elementary, Mr. Bennett shared in his submission that teachers are well aware that many of their students face daily struggles, but when they come to school, there is an opportunity to inspire and engage them. Mr. Bennett has found that you can create magic for a child, even in the most mundane tasks, when it's presented with a vibrant theme.

As a Gifted & Talented Resource Teacher at Prospect Mill and Halls Cross Roads Elementary schools, Ms. Recor recognizes the daily struggle for gifted students to find appropriate education. She will be using the award to send more school teachers and administrators to the Maryland Educators of Gifted Students (MEGS) Annual Conference, which will introduce more local educators to the tools and methodology behind shaping challenging, talent-developing lessons.

Mike MacPherson, Freedom Federal Credit Union's President and CEO, emceed the reception, and was first to congratulate the recipients on their inspirational ideas. "Freedom is dedicated to providing support and resources to our Harford County schools, administrators, and faculty. What an honor it is for us to play a part in helping these teachers see their great ideas put into action".

Mary Beth Stapleton, Coordinator of Business and Community Partnerships for Harford County Public Schools (HCPS), attended the reception. "Freedom Federal continues to be a great partner to the school system on so many different levels. We are grateful for their continued support and excited to congratulate this year's Golden Apple recipients," said Stapleton.

The annual competition is intended to support Freedom Federal Credit Union members who are employed through HCPS and have a creative vision for education that can only be met with community support. All applicants were asked to submit an essay demonstrating how their idea would serve their students, class, school and the Harford County community. Entries were judged by a panel of Freedom employees, board members, and community leaders.

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### **About Freedom Federal Credit Union**

Freedom Federal Credit Union is a community-chartered federal credit union offering consumer financial services to those who live, work, volunteer, worship, attend school, or have family in Harford County. Additionally, Freedom offers a full-line of banking services for all businesses, associations, and other organizations that are based in Harford County. Freedom has been in business since 1953 and has five locations throughout Harford County. To learn more, visit [freedomfcu.org](http://freedomfcu.org)

### **About Harford County Public Schools**

The mission of Harford County Public Schools is that each student will attain academic and personal success in a safe and caring environment that honors the diversity of our students and staff. The vision of the Board of Education of Harford County is to inspire and prepare each student to achieve success in college and career.