



*The National Association for Magnet and Theme-based Schools*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Magnet Schools of America Announces 2018 National Award Winners**

*Washington, DC, April 30, 2018* - Magnet Schools of America (MSA), announced the recipients of its 2018 national awards in Chicago, IL during the 36<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Magnet Schools (April 25-29, 2018), hosted by Chicago Public Schools. During the conference over 1,300 magnet school leaders and educators gathered to share best practices and to celebrate the nation's top magnet schools. "We are proud to acknowledge these awardees for their commitment to creating extraordinary theme-based magnet schools that promote diversity, innovation, and academic excellence in the classroom," said Magnet School of America, Executive Director Todd Mann.

**East Career and Technical Academy** in Las Vegas, NV received MSA's highest recognition the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award, which is given annually to the nation's top magnet school. **Dr. Michael Lofton** from Spring Hill High School in Columbia, South Carolina was named the National Magnet School Principal of the Year. **Dr. April Guenzler** from Brooks Museums Magnet Elementary in Raleigh, North Carolina was named the National Magnet School Teacher of the Year.

At the school district level, the **School District of Palm Beach County** was presented with the Donna Grady-Creer District Award for Magnet Sustainability and **Dr. Stephen Hefner** from the School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties in South Carolina was named the 2018 Magnet Schools of America Superintendent of the Year.

**Donna Grady-Creer District Award for Magnet Sustainability** – Sponsored by Dr. Judith Stein

#### ***School District of Palm Beach County, FL***

The Donna Grady-Creer Award acknowledges a school district that exemplifies equity, excellence, and diversity while sustaining strong and dedicated support for magnet schools. The School District of Palm Beach County's magnet programs are committed to equity and are designed to attract all Palm Beach County students. The district is proud that the student demographics of its magnet programs almost perfectly reflect the diversity of the district as a whole. Families with students entering pre-kindergarten through grade 12 have the opportunity to choose from an array of theme-based curricula offerings in the 115 magnet schools and 315 programs offered in the School District of Palm Beach County.

#### **Magnet Schools of America Superintendent of the Year**

##### ***Dr. Stephen Hefner, School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties, South Carolina***

This annual award recognizes the important work of leadership within our school districts to keep magnet schools a priority in the portfolio of school choice options. Dr. Hefner's unyielding focus on expanding school choice by creating magnet options in District Five has been the catalyst for school improvement districtwide. Spanning nearly 30 years, Dr. Hefner has facilitated the creation of numerous magnet schools and programs in two South Carolina districts, many of which have been recognized by Magnet Schools of America as Schools of Excellence and Schools of Distinction, and achieved designation as Nationally Certified Magnet Schools. In District Five, Dr. Hefner has also helped school leaders secure

two multi-million dollar federal Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) grants, including a \$10.3 million grant in 2013 and \$13.7 million grant announced last fall.

### **National Magnet School Principal of the Year**

***Dr. Michael Lofton, Spring Hill High School, School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties, Columbia, South Carolina***

Dr. Michael Lofton is the founding principal of Spring Hill High School, a career pathways magnet school in School District Five that offers five focus programs to students from grades 9-12 including: Engineering, Entertainment, Entrepreneurial, Environmental Studies and Exercise Science academies. Through these academies, students are immersed into high tech, real-world environments which develop core knowledge, ignite imagination and make learning relevant by using themed standards-based curriculum. This approach enhances college and career readiness by guiding students to make critical connections between their educational journey and the dynamic world. Spring Hill is the second highest rated high school in the state and its students consistently perform above state and national averages on SAT, ACT, and AP exams.

### **National Magnet School Teacher of the Year**

***Dr. April Guenzler, Brooks Museums Magnet Elementary, Wake County Public School System, Raleigh, North Carolina***

Dr. April Guenzler has been a classroom teacher in North Carolina for 17 years. She became a National Board certified teacher in 2014 and graduated with an EdD in Curriculum and Instruction from Gardner-Webb University in May of 2016. Dr. Guenzler loves working with families and their communities and is passionate about integrated curriculum. She has been a part of her school since the conception of its magnet program and her teaching philosophy clearly aligns with the Paideia principles, which provide the foundation for Brooks Museums Magnet Elementary. She believes that learning occurs when students are actively engaged in hands-on authentic experiences and she has facilitated professional development on Paideia Principles, Responsive Classroom, museums approaches to learning, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), and curriculum unit design.

She is also a mentor at her school and works weekly with new teachers (during their first three years of initial licensure) to develop their capacity in teaching. Most recently she was invited by Gardner-Webb faculty to become involved with the Urban Educators Leadership Collaborative (UELCC) through Teachers College at Columbia University, NY.

### **2018 National Magnet School Merit Award Winners**

National merit awards are given to magnet schools that demonstrate a commitment to high academic standards, curriculum innovation, successful desegregation and diversity efforts, and strong parent and community involvement. To be considered for a merit award, member schools must submit an application that is scored by a panel of educators.

This year, 389 magnet schools applied for national merit awards, making 2018 the most competitive year in the award program's history. There are two categories of merit awards: (1) Magnet Schools of Excellence, the top merit award given to only a select group of magnet schools and (2) Magnet Schools of Distinction, the second highest award of recognition. The highest ranked magnet schools in the Excellence category are eligible to receive MSA's highest national awards listed below.

- East Career and Technical Academy (*Clark County School District, NV*) received the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award, which is named after MSA's founding member. It is sponsored by American Education Solutions, Inc.
- Van Nuys High School (*Los Angeles Unified School District, CA*) received the Dr. Donald Waldrip Award, which is named after MSA's first Executive Director. The Waldrip Award is Magnet Schools of America's second highest honor.
- Liberty Elementary STEM Museum Magnet (*Broward County Public Schools, FL*) received the President's Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence. The President's Award is Magnet Schools of America's third highest honor bestowed on behalf of the President of MSA.
- Farmington Woods International Baccalaureate PYP Magnet Elementary (*Wake County Public School System, North Carolina*) received the Elementary Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence.
- *Young Women's Preparatory Academy (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL)* received the Secondary Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence.
- McCaw STEAM Academy (*Clark County School District, NV*) received the New & Emerging Magnet School of Merit Award sponsored by Hogan Lovells, LLC.

### **2018 Merit Awardee Profiles**

#### **Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Award – American Education Solutions, Inc.**

East Career and Technical Academy is a Magnet Schools of America Nationally Certified Demonstration School. It is a Title I School and the only five-star high school in Nevada that serves a free and reduced lunch student population of over 60 percent. Students at East Tech enroll in one of eight themes such as construction technology, culinary arts, health information management, or marketing and hospitality. All of these programs are divided into three houses to promote a smaller learning community environment. It is part of the Clark County School District in Nevada.

#### **Dr. Donald R. Waldrip Award –**

Van Nuys High School offers three magnet programs: medical; performing arts; and science, technology, and math. Each magnet program is infused with a college preparatory core curriculum of mathematics and sciences regardless of study. The arts include a variety of creative opportunities including dance, theater, voice, music, film, and stage technology. It is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District in California.

#### **President's Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence –**

Liberty Elementary is a STEM museum magnet school that seeks to prepare students to become problem solvers who can compete in a global society. It integrates STEM instruction and activities throughout the school day. Students at Liberty Elementary demonstrate their content knowledge by completing semester long cross-curricular STEM projects that are showcased twice yearly when the school is transformed into a museum. It is part of Broward County Public Schools in Florida.

#### **Elementary Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence -**

Farmington Woods Elementary embraces inquiry based learning with a focus on global understanding. It seeks to empower critical thinkers through a rigorous IB curriculum that fosters lifelong learning,

international mindedness, and citizenship. It is part of the Wake County Public School System in North Carolina.

### **Secondary Magnet School of Merit Award of Excellence –**

Young Women’s Preparatory Academy is the first single-gender public school in Miami. It was established in 2006 as a one-to-one technology leadership magnet school for 6-12th grade girls. The school’s leadership theme is based on Steven Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens. It is part of Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida.

### **New and Emerging Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence - Hogan Lovells, LLC**

McCaw STEAM Academy engages students in the critical areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math with a focus in geological science. The goal of the school is to help students become innovators and critical thinkers while developing a growth mindset that begins with goal setting. This all takes place during an extended day that allows students to participate in Makerspace, Robotics, and Fine Art Labs as well as engage in the Design Thinking Process in its Discovery Center. It is part of the Clark County School District in Nevada.

### **About Magnet Schools of America:**

Magnet Schools of America is a nonprofit education association that was founded in 1986 and authorized as a 501(c)3 in 1994. It represents approximately 4,340 magnet schools serving nearly 3.5 million students. It sponsors a national awards program, hosts professional development activities, and provides technical assistance through the National Institute for Magnet School Leadership (NIMSL). MSA supports and serves the leaders and teachers of magnet and theme-based schools, while promoting the development of new magnet programs and public schools of choice.

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