

FMS' LeBrun named Counselor of the Year

Counselor at school since 2008 was 'absolutely shocked'



Kendra Leigh Miller/Daily Times

FMS guidance counselor Lori LeBrun stands with her award in front of students' thank you cards.

KENDRA LEIGH MILLER
Kent County Times

COVENTRY — Lori LeBrun, guidance counselor at Coventry's Feinstein Middle School, was completely taken by surprise when she was named Rhode Island Guidance Counselor of the Year by the Rhode Island Association of School Counselors.

The school committee presented her with an award plaque and flowers at Tuesday's meeting.

"I was completely, absolutely shocked," LeBrun said. "I had no idea I was being nominated," she said. "I do the job because I love it but to be recognized is a really nice

feeling."

LeBrun has been a guidance counselor at the middle school since 2008. She has been an educator in Coventry for 24 years, working as a teacher, a math and literacy coach and a program coordinator for the district's teacher mentor program.

She, along with her fellow colleagues Trish Dorchie and Cheryl Sevigny, guide more than 400 students for their three years at the middle school — from sixth to eighth grade.

"I do the job because I love it but to be recognized is a really nice feeling."

—Lori LeBrun
Feinstein MS guidance counselor

"The most important aspect of my job is being able to make a personal connection and reach out to the kids in any way I can and getting to know them as well as I can," she said.

As a guidance counselor, she has coordinated the recovery, teacher appreciation, school-wide assemblies, and grade transition programs. She also started a student bereavement and truancy group to support students.

LeBrun said after being in a classroom for so many years and having only about 25 students to "worry

about", it is challenging and interesting to be in a different role — the person students are referred to when they need extra attention.

She recalled being a student herself when she attended Coventry High School and Al Bernard was her guidance counselor.

"He went above and beyond to make sure his students had access to him all the time," she said.

She was able work for him at an internship when she was going for her Master's degree at Rhode Island College.

"The most important piece of advice he gave me was to always make

See **LEBRUN**, Page A-2

LeBrun picks up hardware

Continued from Page A-1

sure the kids know you're there, no matter what," she said.

She admitted there was a day in the past that was particularly difficult.

"I was ready to walk and seriously considered quitting because I was sure this job wasn't for me, but Dr. Almeida, the school principal, reassured me I was doing a great job," she said. "It was such a great thing to hear, it was exactly what I needed to hear. He saved me that day."

She learns as much as she can about her students then if

a student needs help in a particular area or subject, she steps out of the box and creates a fun way for them to reach their goals.

One of her biggest challenges each day is to keep the motivation going. If she knows a student enjoys playing basketball or taking care of animals or whatever it is they enjoy, if they finish all their work for the week and make sure they're caught up, she will arrange that activity for a reward.

Another way she thinks outside the box is writing her students quick, little letters for

jobs well done.

"If I know they met their goals for the past week or two, or if I know they had a great game, I'll write them a little note telling them 'good job'", LeBrun said. "It's really important to do that, they see their actions matter and that you are paying attention."

LeBrun's family, her husband Donald and their three sons, is incredibly supportive.

"They definitely help keep me steady if I feel overwhelmed," she said. "Hopefully, I'm making a difference; hopefully they know my door is open all the time."