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Megan Thoma Named a Top Inspiring Teacher in Rhode Island and Honored With \$10,000 from the National University System - Sanford Teacher Award

The National University System-Sanford Teacher Award recognizes one PreK-12 teacher in each state, following a nomination and application process based on criteria of inspiring teaching; The awards, supported by philanthropist T. Denny Sanford, reflect the mission of the Sanford Harmony and Sanford Inspire programs

Nov. 27, 2018 – San Diego, Calif. – In recognition of inspirational teaching nationwide, Megan Thoma of Paul Cuffee Upper School in Providence has been named the Rhode Island recipient of the first-ever National University System-Sanford Teacher Award. The 51 teachers, representing each state, and the District of Columbia, each receive \$10,000 for demonstrating their commitment to creating inspirational and harmonious classrooms that support student development and achievement. The award is in the name of philanthropist T. Denny Sanford, who is committed to supporting inspiring teaching nationwide through PreK-12 programs that are being expanded nationally by the National University System. Each of today's teacher recipients qualify for a chance to be recognized as the national winner of the Sanford Teacher Award, which will be named in early 2019.

The teachers being named today were selected by a committee of educators based on an application process that included nominations and information provided by each teacher to assess how closely they represent characteristics of inspiring teaching, which included: Enthusiasm for teaching; empathy and warmth towards all students; fostering positive relationships with all students; creating a positive learning environment; and recognizing student strengths.

The qualities reflect the mission of education-focused programs based on the vision of Mr. Sanford that are being expanded nationally through the leadership of the private, nonprofit National University System, which is home to one of the Top Ten largest schools of education in the country. The Sanford Programs include [Sanford Harmony](#), a PreK-6 social emotional learning program that helps children develop communication and collaboration skills, and the PreK-12 [Sanford Inspire](#) program that offers teachers research-based resources and lessons to create inspiring classroom experiences.

"The National University System is so pleased to be honoring the vision of philanthropist T. Denny Sanford by recognizing inspiring teachers around the country through the Sanford Teacher Award," said Dr. Michael R. Cunningham, Chancellor of the San Diego-based National University System. "Teachers give so much of themselves to their students, schools and

communities, and the Sanford Teacher Award is a way for us to celebrate the contributions of inspiring teachers who encourage children to reach their greatest potential.”

The Sanford Teacher Award is part of the national expansion efforts of the National University System-based Sanford Programs, which in addition to Sanford Harmony and Sanford Inspire also includes a national network of fundraiser training programs anchored by the Sanford Institute of Philanthropy at National University. Mr. Sanford has donated about \$130 million toward the National University System in support of the programs’ national expansion, an effort that involves the collaboration of universities around the country that share a similar focus and dedication to the professional support of educators and the nonprofit sector. To date, more than 3 million people have been impacted by the three programs.

“As a child, I was fortunate to have a few teachers who truly inspired me to learn and succeed. Educators have many similar opportunities to touch children’s lives and make meaningful impacts that can last a lifetime,” said Mr. Sanford. “As an entrepreneur and philanthropist, I can think of no better return on investment than inspiring students to embrace learning and find their path in life.”

The teachers being honored today are in addition to five Inaugural Sanford Teacher Award recipients who were identified earlier on in the campaign for representing key qualities being celebrated by the Sanford Teacher Award, and who were involved in raising awareness of the campaign. Both the Inaugural recipients and the teachers announced today qualify for the national title, which adds up to a total award of \$50,000 for one of the teachers.

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About the National University System

The National University System is a network of accredited nonprofit education institutions serving higher education and K-12 students that includes National University, John F. Kennedy University, City University of Seattle, and the Division of Pre-College Programs. Established in 2001 to meet the emerging challenges and demands of education in the 21st Century. The anchor institution, [National University](#), was founded in 1971 and is among the largest private, nonprofit institutions of higher education in California with more than 150,000 alumni and among the Top Ten largest schools of education in the country, the Sanford College of Education. For more information on the National University System: <https://www.nusystem.org/>

About the Sanford Programs at the National University System

The Sanford Programs at National University System was established in 2014 through the generous support of philanthropist T. Denny Sanford to provide innovative programs in the nonprofit and PreK-12 sectors. National University System is leading the national expansion of three initiatives: The Sanford Institute of Philanthropy helps support the preparation of nonprofit frontline fundraiser leaders to contribute to positive societal change. PreK-12 [Sanford Inspire](#) offers a toolkit of research-based teaching methodologies, and on-demand, self-guided modules that are accessible online to help teachers create inspiring classroom environments that encourage students to succeed. [Sanford Harmony](#) is a PreK-6 research-based social-emotional learning program that cultivates strong classroom relationships between all students. Sanford Harmony has been recognized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as a quality program. <http://sanfordprograms.org/>