



**For Immediate Release**

### **Rotary Club Presents Urbandale ELL Teacher With Hero In Education Award**

*Kristin Pawlowski receives the 2014 Ken Lepley Memorial Hero in Education Award for her innovative leadership, admirable perseverance and all-encompassing dedication to finding solutions that better support English Language Learner students and their families*

**URBANDALE, Iowa – June 3, 2014** – On May 23, 2014, the [Rotary Club of Northwest Des Moines](#) celebrated the professional prowess and wholehearted dedication Kristin Pawlowski brings to all her English Language Learner (ELL) students by presenting her with the 2014 Ken Lepley Memorial Hero in Education Award as well as \$500 to use toward professional development or supplies in her classroom. The annual Hero in Education Award is presented to a teacher that has gone above and beyond the responsibilities of a professional educator. Pawlowski, a 15-year ELL teacher at [Karen Acres Elementary](#), was not only recognized for the profound impact she had made in the classroom by helping her students achieve success, but also outside the classroom as an advocate for English Language Learner families in her school and throughout the entire Urbandale Community School District.

Pawlowski's unique commitment to her students aligns with the district's vision to bring learning to life for everyone. For the 15th year, she has taken a group of ELL students to her grandmother's farm in Runnels, Iowa to provide a hands-on learning experience. While at the farm, the ELL students go on a hayride, eat lunch in a log cabin, explore the pond, pick apples and feed horses and cows. This trip is truly one of the highlights of the year and one that students remember fondly for years after. For many of the students, this is the only exposure they have to farm life in Iowa. For others, the visit to the farm is a trip down memory lane, as many students lived on farms in their native countries.

"Kristin is a leader among the ELL teachers within the UCSD. She truly deserves to be recognized as a 'Hero in Education,'" said Brenda Auxier-Mailey, Director of Student Services, Urbandale Community School District.

Pawlowski started an ELL Clothing Drive her first year of teaching with a simple email to her colleagues and friends. It has grown from 50 boxes of clothes to a 350-box effort and draws over 200 people. Last year's families took home clothing, toys, books, supplies and more. Clothing that did not find homes among the ELL families in Urbandale was donated to the [Urbandale Clothing Closet](#) and Zion Lutheran Church for their clothing closet (benefiting many Burmese refugees in the area).



Kristin Pawlowski, ELL Teacher at Karen Acres Elementary, receives the 2014 Ken Lepley Memorial Hero in Education Award

Another example of Pawlowski’s commitment to her ELL students occurred a few years ago when several ELL students were informed that they would not be able to ride the bus to school because their home was within walking distance. Pawlowski took it upon herself to make sure every one of her students got the note home informing their parents, but she didn’t stop there. She and another coworker walked the ELL students home on a Thursday after school. The following Friday morning, Pawlowski met the students outside their apartment complex to be sure the students took the correct route to school.

“I’m a fortunate person to love what I do, and with whom I do it. One of the aspects of this job that I have always loved the most is getting to know families personally, working with multiple siblings and becoming a person at school that they trust.” said Kristin Pawlowski, ELL Teacher, Karen Acres Elementary.

Pawlowski is always on the lookout to facilitate connections between the school and community. She has been instrumental in making connections with the Urbandale Community Action Network, Freedom for Youth Ministries, and Aldersgate United Methodist Church to start an after school tutoring, recreation, and meal program for students on Monday nights.

Years ago, she knew something needed to be done to help families with language barriers with their students’ homework. Pawlowski banded together with other teachers at Karen Acres Elementary and started the Homework Club. This club is run by teachers who volunteer a couple nights a week to assist students with their homework. Over the years, Pawlowski has also spearheaded the writing of multiple grants to build bilingual reading backpacks for students to checkout, and grants to purchase reading materials and other supplies to help the students with their homework.

Pawlowski is one of the District’s Literacy Leaders providing leadership in the area of the Iowa Core literacy standards across disciplines and using diagnostic assessments effectively to meet the needs of individual students. This select group of teacher-leaders is the backbone to the District’s

implementation of Iowa Core literacy at the elementary level. Pawlowski is thought of by her teaching peers as a go-to teacher when it comes to understanding and embedding the Iowa Core Standards into literacy units and teaching ELLs.

Pawlowski has been instrumental in getting math games into the hands of Urbandale ELLs. She first implemented a math game night at Karen Acres; it was so successful that she shared it with the entire District ESL team. Inviting elementary ESL teachers across the District to join her in creating a District-wide ELL math game night where families come to learn to play math games centered around math sense. She also makes sure that each family takes home translated directions and all of the supplies necessary to play the games at home.

Throughout the 15 years Pawlowski has taught ELLs in Urbandale, her enthusiasm has not faded, on the contrary—because of her contagious enthusiasm she has persuaded other professionals, community members, organizations and family members to embrace the District’s growing population of ELL students and their families making Urbandale Community Schools a District known for outstanding services to ELL families. Urbandale congratulates Pawlowski on this much-deserved honor and is thankful for the valuable contribution she provides to so many students, families and community members.

#### **About Rotary**

Rotary International is an organization of business and professional leaders who provide humanitarian service and help to build goodwill and peace in the world. There are 1.2 million Rotary members in 34,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas. Rotary clubs have been serving communities worldwide for more than a century. The first Rotary club was founded in Chicago in 1905. For more information on Rotary International, visit [www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

#### **About Urbandale Community School District**

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The district serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale district supports an increasingly diverse student population where 50 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the district. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: [www.urbandaleschools.com](http://www.urbandaleschools.com)

Urbandale Community School District  
11152 Aurora Avenue  
Urbandale, IA 50322

#### **Contact:**

Dena Soenke  
Communications Partner  
Urbandale Community School District  
soenked@urbandaleschools.com

###