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Local woman named counselor of the year

By GINA CLEAR THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

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Hardin County Schools Early College and Career Center guidance counselor Kristi Wright recently was named Kentucky School Counselor Association High School Counselor of the Year.

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School has yet to start for the year, but Hardin County Schools Early College and Career Center counselor Kristi Wright already has a little hardware to adorn her office.

The 25-year veteran educator recently was named the Kentucky School Counselor Association High School Counselor of the Year.

“I am completely humbled,” she said. “I’m just a reflection of so many around me — my work family, these impressive students that we have in our district. We are blessed with this community of outstanding educators. I feel like I’m just a mirror, that it’s not me, I’m just a reflection of everyone around me.”

While he said Wright never would be one to bask in accolades, EC3 Principal Dan Robbins said the recognition is entirely deserved.

“I don’t want to be cliché, but she is 100% invaluable,” he said. “You can’t even put a mark of measure on what she does for our students.”

Robbins said while guidance counselors “play such an important role” in schools, Wright’s commitment to students goes beyond working to create schedules for the students that come to the school from the county’s three high schools — Central Hardin, John Hardin and North Hardin.

“How she is able to work with our three high schools helping our students in true individualized attention towards career pathways, life goals, she encompasses all of that for our students,” he said. “Not only that, she builds a phenomenal relationship with them.”

Wright said building relationships is an important part of her work and it was a lesson instilled early in her career.

“I remember that when I was at WKU, I was taking one of my first education courses,” she said. “The professor said to us early on in our class that students don’t hear you unless they trust you. When he said that, I internalized it.”

“That’s been the core of building relationships with students,” she added, saying to do so requires listening to students.

“When you peel back the onion with students trying to get to know them on a little more of a personal basis ... then it can help develop relationships,” she said.

That allows her to help students, especially seniors, determine their next step after high school, whether it be in a career, college or the military.

“It is so amazing how much those kids appreciate five to 10 minute sit-down conversations just to say, ‘Hey, what are you thinking about? This time next year, life’s going to look different for you. What do you see yourself doing and how can we ... help you best transition for that?’ ” she said. “We get so much good feedback from them. ... It’s just taking that time and showing that genuine interest in them.”

Wright insisted student success is a team effort — from the teachers and staff at EC3 to teachers and staff at the feeder high school — and that it isn’t just one person who makes it happen.

“Every day that I get to come to work, my work family mean so much to me,” she said. “It’s wonderful just knowing that every time I open the door to come in, I have a lot of support from my work family. I am fortunate to work in this wonderful building with all of the opportunities for Hardin County kids.”

Robbins said Wright’s collaboration with the school and district’s staff and student also is indicative of how important she is to those she serves.

“There’s so much I can say about her, but I think that all these things I say about her dedication to students, it’s the same with our staff,” he said. “All of it is around true, authentic relationships. That’s what she’s about. She just pours everything into her students.”

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