



## Teacher of the Year BLOG



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On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Greater Excellence in Education Foundation (GEEF) honored 21 educators as everyday heroes in their annual gala. My coteacher, Daniel Zubrowski was among those being honored that night. He is a special educator who has worked by my side for the last five years. He is the type of teacher who brings out the best in those he is around – both students and adults.

When I shared with our students the award he won, I asked them why they think out of all the awards in the world, Mr. Z would receive the “Everyday Hero Award”? One girl timidly raised her hand and stood up to share the words that will stay with me forever. “He received the award because a hero is someone who changes our lives for the better, and that is what he does for us every day.”

Those words brought silence to my voice and tears to my eyes. She is absolutely right. Mr. Z does change their lives for the better. As teachers, that is our calling. We are given this one moment in time with these students. We are destined to make a difference in their lives. The day we signed our contract to become teachers, we signed up for a profession where we will make a difference. Not in one life or two. But in hundreds of children’s lives. What type of difference we make is left to us.

Many times we think of a hero as one who saves another life. Perhaps a hero is one who puts his/her life in front of another. I once heard that a hero is someone who gives his life for something bigger than oneself. My student believes a hero is someone who changes your life for good. The definition of heroes can change from person to person, but the affect a hero has on one’s life stays with that person forever. There is no doubt in my mind that some of the greatest heroes I have met have also worn the name, “Teacher.”

Teachers are working with 6 year olds and 12 year olds and those on the verge of adulthood. These students’ hearts are soft, and their lives are before them. I have yet to meet a 5<sup>th</sup> grader who can’t be motivated, who doesn’t have a dream, and who doesn’t have someone in their life they love more than themselves. When we find out what their dreams are, determine who has captured their heart, and unlock those unseen compartments they keep hidden from the world – we begin to see them for not just who they were but more importantly who they one day will become. We replace their fears and uncertainties with love and acceptance. We break through those barriers and build a bridge for their successes. When we see the best in our students, we inspire them to be better than they ever thought possible. We inspire them to be

better than this world thought they could. To me, when we are able to do this for our students we become their heroes as they go out and change the world. The mark of a good teacher is when our students are able to surpass our achievements.

I am grateful for the GEEF for recognizing each year the everyday heroes of our schools. The work these teachers do does not go unnoticed, though their full impact may not be known for years to come. Congratulations to the winners of the Everyday Hero Award. The list of these heroes can be found here. [http://geefinc.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=39&Itemid=127](http://geefinc.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=39&Itemid=127)

