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**COMMUNITY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS DISTRICT 168, SAUK VILLAGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
WINS NATIONAL TEACH KINDNESS CHALLENGE**

*School Selected Among More than 650 Registered Schools, From 50 States for Its Strong Commitment to
Create A More Positive School Culture*

(SAUK VILLAGE, ILLINOIS)— At a celebration at Wagoner Elementary School today, students learned that their school is the **2019 National Teach Kindness Challenge Champion**, a distinction that honors their efforts to improve school climate and make the school a safe and supportive place for all students. Teach Kindness is a program created by Stand for Children, a national non-profit education advocacy organization.

As part of the Teach Kindness Challenge, students take part in four weeks of activities and lessons that bolster social-emotional learning and foster a kinder school culture. Students at Wagoner Elementary earned the attention of Stand for Children by going well beyond the classroom lessons and making the 4-week challenge uniquely their own. Wagoner Elementary instituted “Community Circles” to provide students with an assigned time to participate in purposeful, guided discussions about how to be kind and deescalate conflict. Students also created and displayed kindness posters and encouraging messages throughout classrooms, completely transforming their building. Wagoner’s educators have seen numerous instances when student behavior shifted completely towards kindness and away from bullying and misbehavior.

“Teach Kindness creates a space for intentional acts of kindness which eventually become innate in our students and our staff,” Mrs. Robin Brewster, a kindergarten teacher stated. “Teachers are able to redirect students back to Teach Kindness activities during periods of conflict. They can draw on this knowledge to resolve conflict in a positive, caring, and kind manner,” she continued.

The goal of Teach Kindness is to make kindness commonplace in elementary and middle schools. The program provides a no-cost, user-friendly platform for teachers to access high-quality lessons that teach students a wide range of fundamental social-emotional skills. Taken as a whole, the lessons are a result of a remarkable collaboration from some of the country’s leading social-emotional learning experts, including Harvard’s Making Caring Common, Facing History and Ourselves, InspirED, Second Step, the Greater Good Science Center and Yale’s Center for Emotional Intelligence. All contributed their best-in-class lessons free of charge.

“The impact of what Wagoner’s teachers, students, and families are accomplishing extend far beyond the walls of their school building to inspire Illinois and indeed this country. At a time when 21% of high school students are bullied, we are reminded of the importance of social-emotional learning and fostering kindness beginning at an early age. This is so important for our students and for retaining our teachers,” said Mimi Rodman, Executive Director of Stand for Children Illinois.

“The Teach Kindness program is built on the belief that kindness is not something we should expect to happen randomly – it is a skill that can and should be taught,” said Daniel O’Donnell, Director of Teach Kindness. “Students at Wagoner Elementary School have demonstrated that even our youngest students are receptive to high-quality social-emotional learning, and that they’re capable of extraordinary things when schools are intentional about teaching and fostering kindness. We are thrilled to honor the achievement of Wagoner Elementary School students and staff, and we invite schools nationwide to join the movement for kindness.”



During today's celebration Community Consolidated Schools DISTRICT 168, Wagoner Elementary School was awarded \$5,000 in DonorChoose.org credit to be used toward the purchase of materials to continue fostering kindness in their school environment.

Wagoner Elementary School:

Wagoner Elementary School, grades Pre-K through 2 grade is located in Sauk Village a suburb south of Chicago, Illinois that services 400 children. Dr. Sharon Paver-Nepote is the principal and Mrs. Monica Laux serves as the assistant principal. Both administrators enthusiastically took over the school at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year. Their focus has been to establish a school that promotes a strong sense of positiveness, belonging, and caring among all members of the educational community. Wagoner's overarching goal is to foster a safe place to learn and grow and to be a place where all learners feel valued and appreciated each and every day.

Wagoner community enjoys significant support from Community Consolidated Schools District 168, under the leadership of Dr. Donna S. Leak, superintendent.

About Teach Kindness:

Teach Kindness, a social-emotional learning program created by national education advocacy organization Stand for Children, is an easy and no-cost way to foster kindness and improve school climate. Open to any school with a combination of grades K-8, Teach Kindness offers best-in-class resources to teach vital life lessons related to kindness, free of charge, over a four-week period of the school's choosing. This is a powerful, common sense solution to some of schools' and society's biggest challenges. By teaching kids to practice kindness on a regular basis, they become better equipped to navigate our complex world and schools become more hospitable learning environments.

About Stand for Children:

Stand for Children is a non-profit education advocacy organization focused on ensuring all students receive a high quality, relevant education, especially those whose boundless potential is overlooked and under-tapped because of their skin color, zip code, first language, or disability. We make an impact by:

- Partnering with parents to support their children's education journey and to become strong advocates.
- Advocating, mainly at the state and local level, for proven policies and funding primarily focused on helping students reach make-or-break milestones:
 - Reading well by the end of third grade
 - Graduating high school ready for college, career training, or a career
- Ensuring the changes we fight for reach classrooms and directly support students.