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Educator Gives Hope To Students Facing Despair

Jeremy Law, a special education teacher at Teasley Middle School, was named the Cherokee County School District's Teacher of the Year.

Canton-Sixes, GA

By KRISTAL DIXON (Patch Staff)
Hope is more than a word for Jeremy Law.
It’s the force that pushes him out of bed early in the morning and carries him through long days as a special education teacher at Teasley Middle School.

It’s the light he sees in students’ eyes when they understand not only a lesson, but also that he believes in them... especially those students who feel no one does.

It’s the strength that fills his heart when the Sequoyah High School football players he coaches need encouragement to overcome challenges on and off the field.

And it’s so much more for the man who on Thursday, Nov. 5 was named the Cherokee County School District's Teacher of the Year.

It’s his mission. It’s his calling. It’s his life.

“Due to circumstances beyond their control, many students enter our classrooms each day without hope,” Coach Law said. “In spite of the grim situations some of our students are surrounded by, we must make an effort to go above and beyond our normal teaching duties to give our students hope. We must help them see a reason to live. We must help them see a reason for tomorrow.”

Principal Dr. Susan Zinkil testified to the impact his hope has on students by sharing the story of one, who years after being in his class recently reached out to Coach Law for support. The student’s mother later told Principal Zinkil that Coach Law’s words saved her daughter’s life.

“These are the students he was born to teach,” Dr. Zinkil said.
The CCSD Teacher of the Year is selected by a panel of community leaders, who evaluate applications from each school's Teacher of the Year. The school winners are selected by their peers. Coach Law will be honored in December at CCSD's annual Teacher of the Year Banquet sponsored by Northside Hospital-Cherokee and Credit Union of Georgia. He also will serve as CCSD's nominee for 2017 Georgia Teacher of the Year; the winner will be named in the spring.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank Petruzielo, who made the surprise presentation to Coach Law on Thursday, praised his service above self and compassion for every child.

“He is deeply committed to giving his students hope no matter where they are,” Dr. Petruzielo said. “If you can give children hope for the present and the future, everything else will fall into place.”

An Etowah High School graduate, Coach Law earned a bachelor's degree in business and pursued a career in banking, but felt called to make a difference in the lives of young people. He remembered his teachers who showed they loved and believed in him, and hope filled his heart again. His new path, Coach Law decided, would be to serve youth as a teacher and football coach.

Coach Law is in his sixth year teaching at Teasley Middle School, where he teaches special education students in resource and general education classes, and at a Sequoyah High School, where he coaches football. He has earned a master’s degree in special education and a specialist degree in curriculum and instruction, as well as the respect from his peers, who now call upon him to mentor new teachers.
“Knowing that I have the opportunity to make an eternal impact on a kid’s life thrills me each day,” Coach Law said. “It’s easy to get out of bed each morning knowing that you have the chance to give a child hope through education.”

In addition to his service in the classroom and on the field, Coach Law also serves the community through his church, First Baptist Church of Woodstock, and as a volunteer at Goshen Valley Boys Ranch.

“He treats all children, despite their circumstance, with dignity and honor encouraging each of them to excel and succeed,” Zach Blend, executive director of the Goshen Valley Foundation, said.

Coach Law, upon being surprised with the district-wide honor on Thursday, said he was humbled to even have been named a finalist for his school’s title.

“We share the same heart,” he said of his colleagues at Teasley Middle. “We’ve got a school full of teachers who want to serve the community.”

Eduardo Carreno, a seventh-grader who sees how Coach Law works with special education students, described him as having “a soft spot for every kid.”

“He pushes us to do out work and doesn’t let us fail,” Eduardo said.

This care, Dr. Petruzielo said, should fill every person in our community with hope, too.

“Teachers like Coach Law are the heroes of our country and certainly our community,” he said.

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Photo 1: Cherokee County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank Petruzielo surprises Teasley Middle School teacher Jeremy Law with the news on Thursday, Nov. 5 that he is the Cherokee County School District’s Teacher of the Year. 
Photo 2: Jeremy Law of Teasley Middle School is the Cherokee County School District’s Teacher of the Year.
Photos 3 and 4: Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank R. Petruzielo, left, congratulates Cherokee County School District Teacher of the Year Jeremy Law of Teasley Middle School as Principal Dr. Susan Zinkil looks on.
Photo credits: Cherokee County School District

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