



The Harper Woods School District

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Principal Janet Gottsleben is retiring

A special person is leaving a special place

Everyone knows Beacon Elementary School is a special place. And, everyone knows Beacon Principal Janet Gottsleben's development and leadership of "The Beacon Way" is one of the primary reasons.

Principal Gottsleben has a deep commitment to Beacon students and families. Her "The Beacon Way" leadership style makes Beacon staff focus on both character development and academic success. Making each day positive for every student is expected at Beacon Elementary School.

"It was a difficult day when Ms. Gottsleben turned in her notice of retirement," said Todd Biederwolf, HWSD Superintendent of Schools. "While we are all sad to see her leave, we are excited to celebrate with her this new phase of her life. I know the traditions she has implemented and the positive attitude she has instilled at Beacon will live on long after her retirement."

On her approaching retirement, Beacon secretary Dee Dee Allemon said: "Her absence will make us all sit back and reminisce about how a boss like her has made our lives most enjoyable. She inspired our hearts and taught us values like honesty and friendship—values that will never retire."

Other Beacon staff members were eager to add their admiration for Gottsleben.

First grade teacher Susan Harris, said that "Janet's experience as a teacher, mom, and friend have combined to make her a compassionate, dedicated leader in our building and community. Her caring nature and expertise radiate on to students, parents, and staff. She has earned the trust and respect of all who know her."

Third grade teacher Kenyatta Hughes said that Janet Gottsleben is "... a great principal because she is a difference maker. She sees solutions, not just problems. She consistently encourages innovation. And she is always committed to making a difference in the lives of children."

Gottsleben, who has been a member of the staff at Beacon for 38 years, will retire at the end of this school year. Over her career, she has positively impacted generations of families in Harper Woods Schools and the entire Harper Woods Community.

"It's impossible to imagine Beacon without Jan Gottsleben," said kindergarten teacher Deborah Bloomhuff. "Her heart, her talents, and her vision are all over this building. She is an incredible administrator who will be greatly missed."

Bloomhuff thinks parking lot attendant Jerry Coleman (who Gottsleben affectionately nicknamed "Captain Coleman") said it best: "She is the best principal ever."

Janet Gottsleben will always be remembered for making Beacon Elementary School a special place where staff are ready to teach and students are ready to learn not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also, as inspired by Principal Gottsleben, "The Beacon Way".



There's always time for hugs at Beacon Elementary School. Ms. Gottsleben calls "air hug" and the students come running.

A legacy of leading, learning, and caring

During an interview with Janet Gottsleben she shares her thoughts about Beacon Elementary School.

"I think of Beacon Elementary School as my second home," said Janet Gottsleben. "Each day, for 38 years, I have looked forward to coming to work. I will always be grateful to the students, staff, and parents who have made being at Beacon a rewarding experience for me."

Gottsleben, said she believes one of the most important accomplishments at Beacon has been developing the positive culture and climate for students. "Students who feel loved and have trust will always do their best," she said.

Everyone agrees that her leadership style is what sets her apart from others. "I have tried to lead by example," she said. "I have high expectations for myself and the staff. I believe it's the staff's commitment to do what's right for students that makes Beacon Elementary School the place I am proud to have spent my career."