



CELEBRATING THE ART OF CARING AND CONNECTION

Newark High School art teacher Renee Bailey has made it her career-long practice to stay in contact with and encourage some of her former students.

Two of them have gone the extra mile in publicly recognizing Bailey for her caring ways.

- ✓ In 2014, former student Kendra Bush, a 2013 NHS graduate who was then pursuing a fine arts degree in Metals and Jewelry Design at RIT nominated Bailey for a surprise WROC News Golden Apple award, noting she not only had been an exemplary teacher in high school, but continued to “encourage and support me” after graduation.

“It is an invaluable relationship she creates with her students and upholds past our high school graduation,” Bush wrote as part of her nominating letter to WROC. *“Her passion as an educator knows no limits. She IS the standard.”*

Bush, who earned her BFA from RIT in Metals and Jewelry Design in 2017, works for Melanie Casey Jewelry in Boston, MA.

- ✓ Recently, former student Grace Blondell, a 2016 NHS grad, who will graduate in May from RIT after only *three years* with a BS in Applied Arts and Sciences with a concentration in communication and visual media and who was recognized March 28th as one of a select group of “Outstanding Scholars,” is another student Bailey has remained in contact with.

As part of RIT “Scholars” recognition, each student, who had completed at least 83 credit hours and earned a cumulative GPA of at least 3.85 for all work as of the end of the previous Spring term, was asked to identify a high school or community college teacher that had a “profound influence on their academic development and who has been an inspiration in their life.” Blondell selected Bailey.

So the NYS art teacher was invited to and attended the March 28th reception, award ceremony, and dinner at RIT in honor of the Outstanding Scholars and their high school or community college teachers at which she received a framed certificate of appreciation during the formal dinner program.

Blondell’s sentiments about Bailey were read before the NHS art teacher received her certificate.

“Renee Bailey is more than a teacher; she is a confidante, a friend, a “school mom,” a life coach. Over the course of four years, she went from somebody I was intimidated by to someone I admired and could talk with about anything. She knew I was a good student and a hard worker, but she continued to push me to be an even better student and work even harder. She taught me how to think, how to develop ideas and how to effectively execute and express them. I am forever grateful for having taken art classes with her throughout my high school career, as I believe it allowed me to grow both as an artist and as a human.”



In the photo above is Renee Bailey, left, and Grace Blondell.

“Overall, the evening was an honor and I was so proud of Grace and her accomplishments,” Bailey said, noting 111 scholars were being recognized with 97 attending. Those 97 scholars nominated 78 teachers, with 45 of them in attendance.

“Most of the students recognized are in their fourth year at RIT,” Bailey said. *“Grace technically should graduate next year, but is graduating a year early and has had a 4.0 her entire college career. The whole night she was humble about her honor and accomplishments. Of all the teachers Grace has had, she chose me. For four years she chose to take art to enrich her life and push her creative boundaries while knowing that if she were in a traditional test driven classroom, she would have gotten a 100 in that class. I was always impressed by that. She is remarkable. Her name says it all.”*

While Blondell is applying for some type of creative internship position, she is hoping long-term to pursue a career in the music industry.

In 2014, after winning WROC’s Golden Apple Award, Bailey, a Newark native, noted how much she appreciated some of her former teachers at NHS staying in contact with her after she graduated.

One in particular was her art teacher, Tom Jagger. She not only decided to pursue a career in art education because of his support and encouragement, but also followed his lead by staying connected to former students.

By staying connected with former students in college and those who are out working, Bailey said her current students understand she is *“in this for the long run.”*

“It just doesn’t stop after they graduate,” she said, adding she also learns much she can pass on to current students about what colleges and employers expect and about their success strategies.

Bailey also thinks it is important that her current students learn about the successes of their predecessors.

“Our program has a lot to offer, despite the size of our school,” she said.

NHS Principal Tom Roote had this to say about Bailey being publicly honored again.

“We are very lucky to have Mrs. Bailey’s great instincts when it comes to finding the joy that is the lasting success her students have outside of her classroom. It is even nicer to see two of our finest giving back to her. Thank you Grace and Kendra for seeing the selflessness in Mrs. Bailey that comes so natural to her. This is her pay day thanks to you!

“The number of Newark alumni on staff is such that those with the energy to gather and maintain the memory of our graduates is to be cherished. She does an impeccable job in this area. In fact, she won a contest at a recent staff meeting where Newark alumni were highlighted in a data activity. In record time, she identified the graduating class I was referencing in my data set. I should note it was helpful that it was her graduating class.”



In the photo above are from left: Donna Blondell, Grace’s mother, Renee Bailey, Grace Blondell and her father, Scott Blondell.