Newark High School vocal music teacher Kate Flock was “absolutely shocked” December 12th when WROC’s News Anchor 8 Adam Chodak and Newark High School freshman Ryan Hermenet, wearing big smiles, unexpectedly waltzed into her classroom.

Seated at the piano in front of risers where her Mixed Choir students were standing, Flock, who’d just received a knock on her door and a heads-up from Principal Tom Roote that she had a visitor, did a double-take when she saw Chodak and learned she was a Golden Apple award winner.

Equally excited was the contingent that followed the news anchor into Flock’s classroom, especially Hermenet who nominated his music teacher for the award WROC gives out weekly to outstanding educators in the region.

In his nominating letter for the award, Hermenet said Flock is “simply amazing.”

“The minute you walk into the choir room, you feel so welcome there,” he wrote. “And like you can accomplish anything you put your mind to. Mrs. Flock connects with her students in a way that no other teacher does... Mrs. Flock is loved by everybody. She puts in all of her effort to make sure the music means something more than just what is written on the staff. She makes it something we, as students, can connect to, and that is a great quality to have. I have never had a teacher as caring, as devoted and as amazing as Mrs. Flock.”

“I would like to say thank you to to Mrs. Flock for everything she does for my peers and I. Music at Newark High School wouldn’t be the same without her, and I hope to make many more musical memories with her,” Hermenet said later.
Others who came to Flock’s classroom to see her receive the surprise award were her husband, Jay, NCSD’s Coordinator of Student Affairs, their son, Andrew; Kate’s parents, Joel and Carol Strub; her mother-in-law Cathy Flock and Cindy Briggs, NCSD Music Department Leader and Kelley School instrumental music teacher.

After she had some time to think about the award, Flock said: “Never, in a million years, would I expect to be surprised with such an honor as “The Golden Apple Award.”

And she recalled some of the things she told Chodak on camera:

- It is important for students to find the emotional connection to the music in order to sing without inhibition.
- These students have my heart and they mean the world to me. I love what I do and it means so much to me that Ryan would nominate me for this.
- If I was to give advice to someone going into the teaching field, it would be to make connections with your students.

Briggs later congratulated Flock on receiving the Channel 8 award.

“So happy for Kate Flock for this well-deserved recognition,” she said. “And what an honor for our music department and Kate. Adam Chodak and Channel 8 put a lot of thought into recognizing these teachers each week and it is so nice to see our teachers recognized for all of the good they do on a daily basis.”

Roote also commended Flock.

“A year or so ago I was mourning the departure of an extraordinary vocal music teacher in Ms. Jean Bendix,” he said. “Truthfully, I was uncertain how her shoes would be filled. While I didn’t quite wish on a star for help, I will say that the stars aligned, and I learned through three or four layers of back-channels that Ms. Flock was considering a move to the high school. Like any good principal I poked around a bit and quickly learned just how talented she was. As a result, I started to fill the back-channels with indications I would love to have her at NHS. Fortunately for me, we were able to formally get her on staff and her work has been simply amazing.

This fall, I was able to view her instruction firsthand a few times and I must point out that the climate in her classroom is simply amazing. Students are being their own unique selves as she moves them through not just a lesson, but a vocal music experience. In fact, on one particular occasion I watched Ryan Hermenet courageously stand in front of 30+ of his classmates to warm them up. We are lucky to have Ms. Flock at NHS!”

Superintendent Matt Cook said:

“The Newark Music Department is second to none and it’s because of outstanding teachers like Kate Flock, who is most deserving of this special recognition.”

Flock has taught vocal music for 19 years in the NCSD. Seventeen of them were spent teaching at Newark Middle School.

She graduated from Red Jacket High School; received her bachelor’s degree in music education from SUNY Fredonia and her master’s degree in education from SUNY Brockport.

Information on when the WROC Golden Apple award segment featuring Flock will be forthcoming.