PUEBLO – Three teachers from Pueblo District 70 have been honored by the Pueblo Chapter of the Colorado Teacher Awards.

Pueblo Schools District 70 recognized Danielle Stevens, a kindergarten-5th grade reading teacher at Avondale Elementary; Amy Morgan, a 3-5th grade language arts teacher at Vineland Elementary; and Randi Richie, a 6th and 7th grade Social Studies teacher at Vineland Middle School. Due to the Covid-19 circumstances, a formal reception will be held to celebrate on a date in the future. The CTA Pueblo Chapter recently announced the awards for District 60 recipients as well.

In order to qualify, honorees must be current teachers who have taught in one of the two school districts for at least five years. Teachers must be nominated by at least two people. Previous winners and retired or deceased teachers are not eligible. Nomination forms are available online (http://www.pueblocityschools.us/colorado-teachers-awards/nominations) and are due the second week of February each year.

PUEBLO SCHOOL DISTRICT 70 HONOREES

Danielle Stevens has been described as having a genuine love and passion for her students. She is creative in her teaching approach, using multiple techniques to bring the best learning opportunities to her students. Early on in her career Stevens participated in a training, learning how boys and girls learn differently. She has used many of those strategies to reach high at-risk boy students. She provides a safe, creative and engaging learning environment where students thrive and rarely have behavior issues.

Working with boys, Stevens brought her love for animals into the class room and taught students how to care for others as they learned to care for her bearded dragon lizard, tarantula, fish and corn snake. Using the unusual teaching aids, the students learned about habitat, diet and the proper way to treat and care for different species.
Stevens is very cognizant of her students' and their needs. Because she works at a school with high needs, poverty, and many Spanish speaking students, she has sought professional development to provide the instruction that these individual students need. She took a class called Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners to equip students to excel in her classroom. Additionally, she collaborates with the Title 1 Resource teacher to continue to meet the needs of her students.

Finally, Stevens is recognized as a compassionate teacher. She loves to work with underprivileged children. Students know without a doubt that she genuinely cares about them. She has high expectations for herself and for her students and she doesn't accept failure as an option. Her classroom management is one that provides for ultimate learning. She teaches her students to respect themselves and to respect others. Most importantly, she teaches students that everyone is different and different is good. There is an attitude of acceptance for differences in her classroom. Her colleagues refer to her as a "champion for the under privileged".

Through a gentle approach for teaching that brings a powerful positive impact to the Vineland student community, Amy Morgan provides a safe and welcoming classroom for her students. As the school year begins, Morgan reviews procedures and expectations for her classroom. She creates an atmosphere full of high expectation. With language arts as the canvas, Morgan challenges her 3-5th grade students “go the extra mile” while setting goals and working hard to achieve them. Students engage in activities around the school that reinforce their learning, while bringing smiles and laughter to their faces.

Morgan’s goal is always to educate students to be critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Always searching for fresh new ways to help her students, she creates exciting lessons while incorporating fun for the students. A few examples are “Text Feature Surgery” including medical professional attire for everyone, “Grammar Bootcamp” with creative jingles for easy recall of information and content scavenger hunts or Mario Brothers Jeopardy and class competitions.

Morgan is the student council sponsor and organizes activities to promote giving and social awareness for the entire school and community. One such activity is the breast cancer walk to offer support to the Dorsey Center at St. Mary Corwin Hospital. She also organizes food drives for our local families in need or scarves for the homeless shelter.

Respected by students, colleagues and administrators alike, Morgan spends hours outside the classroom as the coordinator for the Gifted and Talented Camps. She is currently involved with the STEAM Academy, bringing 21st Century skills and exposure to future STEM based careers to our 4th and 5th graders.

Combining learning, discipline and fun, Randi Richie creates a dynamic atmosphere where social studies come to life for the 6th and 7th grade students at Vineland Middle School. Using her classroom as an inspirational setting, Richie establishes an environment rich in dialogue, where students feel safe to grow, learn and explore. Students participate in Challenge Thursdays. Students are given the opportunity to explore history and civics material on their own after initial background information is given. During the challenge lesson, students are given certain materials and must create a major geographical location using limited resources. Recent challenges included making the Great Wall of China out of play-dough, building castles out of foam blocks and sugar cubes and debating the strengths and weaknesses of knights and samurais. As students are building, they must use critical thinking skills, teamwork and ingenuity to recreate the topic of the week. Students are involved in contemplating how ancient civilizations
were built, the advancement of technology and how these locations influence and affect today’s modern world. Students present their information and challenge creations to the class and must explain the connection of history to today. These challenges have led to great classroom discussions as well as generating excitement and enthusiasm. Richie uses several strategies that challenge students while developing critical thinking skills. For example: during group discussions, she incorporates the pause and wait technique, giving students who struggle time to gather their thoughts. Students are also given time to think through their decisions and encouraged to solve problems on their own. Richie uses the “Golden Rule” to set expectations and models how to treat others with kindness and respect. For the past eight years, she has generously provided a school-wide field trip to the Colorado Rockies Science Day. She is also one of the leaders of the Sources of Strengths student group.

*Founded in 1956 by Charles W. Lerch, the Colorado Teacher Awards recognize excellence in teaching as a tribute to all teachers and provides a means by which the business community and general public can honor outstanding teachers. This is the 32nd year that Pueblo County teachers have been honored. As part of the award, both the teachers and their schools receive a small stipend in recognition of the teachers’ efforts.*