NEWS RELEASE

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Bruce Schonberger Selected as 2022-23 North Dakota Education Support Professional of the Year

BISMARCK, N.D. – As part of American Education Week this year, North Dakota United plans to celebrate all the hard-working professionals at work in our public schools and universities. This Wednesday, Nov. 16, is Education Support Professional Day, which is dedicated to all the amazing staff members we have working for students. On behalf of our more than 11,000 members, we were proud to announce this year’s recipient is Bruce Schonberger, a custodian for Minot Public Schools, at a school ceremony Oct. 24 at Central High School in Minot.

"This was kind of unexpected," Schonberger said on receiving the honor. "I got a couple of messages I wasn't supposed to, so I kind of had any idea that something was going to happen. Not quite to this scale."

“Education support professionals, whatever their jobs, play a vital role in the education of our students across North Dakota,” ND United President Nick Archuleta said. “Custodians are charged with keeping the learning environments accessible, clean and safe for kids, and they take these responsibilities seriously. Bruce is a sterling example of the men and women who don’t just take pride in maintaining the buildings in which our children learn, but also take pride in being part of the team that supports these kids every day. He has proven himself to be a confidant and trusted advisor to many young people as they work their way through school. For his incredible efforts, it is our pleasure to award the 2022-23 ESP of the Year to Mr. Bruce Schonberger.”

Schonberger has worked for Minot Public Schools for over a decade, starting at Lewis and Clark Elementary School before moving over to Central High. In her nomination letter for Bruce, Minot Education Association President Kristi Reinke said that, in addition to his custodial and building maintenance responsibilities, he also serves on the MPS Safety Committee and helps handle emergencies and unexpected problems at one of the largest schools in the district.

"One of his favorite things is to have the opportunity to be out in the halls with the students,” Reinke said. “Particularly, he loves to spend time with the special-needs kids in his school. He shares high-fives, helping them when they are having rough times and being there for the special times. Seeing their smiles make my days better, as I am certain, seeing his face makes their days better, as well!"

(more)
"We have fun," Schonberger said about his experiences with students and faculty. "We have bad
days, but we have more good days than bad. So, it's just getting along, meeting them and finding
out what they're like. That was one thing my parents taught me: If you're there to do a job, do it
right. You do it all the way through; you don't do it halfway and expect it to be good. Make sure
it's better than good."

Schonberger has also been extremely involved with his local association and all of the ESPs who
work with him in Minot. He is the financial officer for Chapter 52 of the North Dakota Public
Employees local, which consists of custodian classified staff in Minot. He regularly attends
monthly Building Representative meetings of the Minot Education Association and reports on
the work his chapter is doing for their schools. He is currently the vice president of the Central
Labor Council of the ND AFL-CIO.

He also organizes a union/public education float every year for the North Dakota State Fair
Parade. "This is a HUGE responsibility as he has to order all the supplies, find volunteers and,
most importantly, he walks in it every year, making sure all the attendees know exactly what the
union and local association is all about," Reinke said.

Each year, the NDU ESP of the Year Award recognizes an outstanding ESP member of our state
association. ESP job categories include: paraprofessional, education assistants, secretarial or
clerical, custodial, food services, maintenance and trades, transportation, grounds-keeping,
security, technology services, health services and more.

Next up for Schonberger is the National Education Association’s ESP of the Year Award
competition. Each year, the NEA and NEA Member Benefits select one ESP member from
among all the state nominees to receive national recognition at the annual NEA ESP National
Conference. This year’s conference is scheduled in Seattle, WA, on March 24-26, 2023. The
entire ESP of the Year program is meant to help recognize and honor all of the many
contributions our ESPs make toward delivering great public schools to every student.

Additional photos and video are available at our website: https://ndunited.co/3X5XWs8

North Dakota United is the largest professional union of public educators and employees in the state,
representing the collective interests of more than 11,000 public school teachers, school staff, university
faculty and staff, and city, county and state employees.