

# Recognizing Manistee County's excellent students

By JODIE FLETCHER  
CITY EDITOR

**MANISTEE** — For the 24th time, the Manistee Elks teamed up with the Manistee County Community Foundation to recognize the accomplishments of students from all the county high schools.

The Community Excellence in Education banquet was held on Monday night at the Elks Lodge, and 20 area high school juniors were honored for being in the top 5 percent of their class.

In addition, each junior chose a mentor — someone they wanted to recognize for their positive influence on their lives. The mentors were each presented a plaque, and on the back, each student had written why they chose their mentors.

"I'd like to thank the Elks, for recognizing the critical role youth play in our community," said Laura Heintzelman, executive director of the MCCF.

She described the work done by the foundation's Youth Advisory Committee, which actively recommends grants to be distributed by the foundation, adding that these kids will be a "positive impact on the community in the future."

Heintzelman introduced Manistee Mayor Cyndy Fuller, who joked that she had the easiest job of the night. She read a proclamation she presented to city council, naming May 1 through 7 Youth Week in Manistee.

"As you move forward in life, recognition is very important," Fuller said, adding that adults often find recognition in their careers in the form of paychecks. "Recognition is more about saying, 'you're important and your achievements are important.'"

Fuller said that, not often enough, recognition of student's achievements is limited to within the school.

"That's what is so fabulous about this," she said.

Guest speaker Timothy Albee, who is an Emmy and Peabody winning visual effects artist, animator, writer, director, producer and author

provided some inspiration for the students by telling them about how he has made "playing" his life's work.

He began his speech with two very simple questions: "Who are you? What do you want to be when you grow up?"

"Ask an adult (these questions) and a lot of them won't have an answer."

He encouraged the students to get to know themselves, to never be afraid of who they are, to respect others, and to be a part of a community.

"Go, run, shoo, have fun, play, go to big cities and see all there is to see and then come back and share what you've learned..." Albee said.

He shared stories from his career, and told the students to make extraordinary choices in life, be compassionate and respectful, "as you live a life of fun and reward far beyond that which can be considered the common man."

Beth McCarthy, chair of the Manistee County Community Foundation, presented the honors — which included a \$100 savings bond for each student.

There were some laughs and a few moist eyes, hugs, handshakes and even a fist bump shared between MHS junior John Stickney and his father. Teachers, parents, grandparents, siblings and friends were all named as the most influential people in the honored youth's lives.

In addition to honoring the top 5 percent of juniors, the Elks also honored a number of seniors. Two, MCC's Ashley Bauman and MHS's Zack Miller were awarded the local Most Valuable Student Scholarship Program Award. They will have to opportunity to compete for scholarships all the way up to the national level.

The Elks also choose two students of month from October to April. Manistee Middle School principal Matt Kieffer presented awards to each of the students.

Kieffer serves as the Elks scholarship chairman, which he referred to as "a really cool job."

"I get to hand out packets of

money for a lot of kids," Kieffer said.

He joked about how encouraging it is to see the kids, many of whom passed through his middle school, grow up and doing exceptional things.

"Back in the middle school, they were doing weird things," he said, drawing laughs from the crowd. "Some of these odd behaviors turn into scholarship (material)."

After presenting the awards to the students chosen each month through the school year, Kieffer announced that from that bunch, which he described as the brightest and best, two students of the year were chosen.

Ashley Bauman and McKenzie Majchrzak were chosen for that award.

In his benediction, Ron Polcyn, mentioned the hard work done by the students to achieve their academic success.

"It doesn't make any difference what brand of polish you use," Polcyn said. "But you have to combine it with elbow grease."



**ELKS STUDENT OF THE YEAR:** Ashley Bauman (pictured here) and McKenzie Majchrzak were named Elks students of the year at Monday night's Excellence in Education banquet.



**ELKS STUDENTS OF THE MONTH:** Two seniors were chosen each month from October to April for the Elks student of the month award. Pictured here (left to right) are Seth Schneider (MHS), Laura Lindgren (MHS), Zack Miller (MHS), Chas Helge (MHS), Bethany Pattison (Bear Lake), Daniel DeBano (Brethren), Ashley Bauman (MCC) and Ian Bergel (MCC). Also awarded as students of the month, but not in attendance on Monday were Ronni Brown (Bear Lake), McKenzie Majchrzak (MHS), Jordan Janowiak (MCC), Erin Brown (OHS), Nathan Perry (MCC) and Anna Veverica (OHS).



**TOP 5 PERCENT:** Juniors were honored with excellence in education awards for achieving grades which put them in the top 5 percent of their class, and chose mentors, each of whom were presented with plaques. Pictured here are the students, with their schools, mentors and relationship to student are in parenthesis: Front row (left to right) Ashley Fraly (Brethren), Gail Matesich, guidance counselor), Janae Ernst (MHS, Cindy Swan-Eagan, band teacher), Elizabeth Richmond (Bear Lake, Diane Pargeon, teacher). Middle Row: Tim Simmerman (CASMAN, Mike Cartwright, best friend), Felicia Senn (MHS, Sarah Helge, choir teacher), Kari Paine (MHS, Cindy Swan-Eagan, band teacher), Rose Savela (MHS, Lucas Savela, brother), Logan Randall (MHS, Jeff Harthun, elementary school teacher), Rebecca Priest (Brethren, Julie Riggs, teacher), Kailani Buckner (OHS, Dana Woolman, art teacher), Mia Orlandi (Earl Watkins, grandfather). Back row: Garrett Owens (MCC, Terry Walker, former basketball coach), Roger Mullet (Bear Lake, Jeff Harthun, teacher), John Stickney (MHS, Ronald Stickney, father, teacher), Alex Johnson (MHS, Robert Johnson, brother), Thomas Bond (MHS, Wendy Adamski, teacher), Zachary Smith (Hugh O'Hagan, grandfather), Dan Gillespie (OHS, Gary Lloyd, Sunday school teacher), Dru Johnson (Brethren, Andrew Amstutz, science teacher). Not pictured is Lacey McDougall (CASMAN, Lisa McDougall, mother). (Jodie Fletcher/News Advocate)



**SPEAKERS:** (ABOVE) Manistee County Community Foundation Executive Director Laura Heintzelman (standing) and MCCF chair Beth McCarthy applaud the achievements of the students. (BELOW) Guest speaker Timothy Albee delivered inspiring words to the students.

