

## Pine-Richland bus driver honored with Champion of Learning Award



TONY LARUSSA | Thursday, February 4, 2021 1:01 p.m.

Editor's note: Neighbor Spotlight is a monthly feature that aims to let our readers learn more about the people in their communities who are working to make them a better place, who have interesting stories to tell or who the community feels deserve "15 minutes of fame." If you would like to nominate someone as a Neighbor Spotlight, email Neighborhood News Network editor Katie Green at [kgreen@triblive.com](mailto:kgreen@triblive.com).

Knowing the names of the kids who ride his bus isn't part of Glynn Newcamp's job description as a driver for the Pine-Richland School District.

Neither is engaging them with brain teasers and riddles or showing up at their sporting events, musical and other performances to cheer them on.

And there's no requirement that the kids have a smile on their faces when they get off his bus.

But the chance to do those things and more for the kids he transports is why Newcamp does the job in the first place.

"My goals is for the kids to want to go to school and learn," said Newcamp, 64, of West Deer. "If that can begin with them having a good time when they get on my bus then I believe they'll probably have a better day at school."

Newcamp's efforts to engage the children he transports recently was recognized by the Consortium for Public Education and the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, which named him a 2020 Champion of Learning in the School Staff category.

Newcamp works for the district's bus service provider Student Transportation of America. He drives students to and from Eden Hall Upper and Richland elementary schools as well as the middle and high schools.

The Navy veteran, who has been driving a bus for 10 years, said being named one of three finalists for the award came as a surprise.

"I thought to myself: 'I could never win this award,'" he said. "I figured the ceremony would be a



COURTESY OF GLYNN NEWCAMP

Pine-Richland bus driver Glynn Newcamp will do just about anything to make sure the kids who ride his bus start the school day with smile on their face. Dressing in costume during the holidays is just one of the things the 2020 Champions of Learning Award winner likes to do to create a fun atmosphere for "his kids."

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chance to go to a nice dinner and maybe get some ideas about what the others did to get nominated. So it was really a shock when they picked me. I'm very humbled."

Consortium officials said Newcamp is just the kind of person the awards aim to honor.

“The people in our community who take time to listen to kids, teach them, guide them or support them often are unsung heroes,” they wrote in a statement announcing the winners.

Newcamp was nominated for the award Christy Karmanos, who has four daughters attending Pine-Richland — Ella, a senior; Kayla, a sophomore; Anna, an eighth-grader; and Lila, who is in third grade.

“I don’t think he recognizes how important he is to the students he drives,” said Karmanos, whose daughters have all been passengers on Newcamp’s bus.

“He is truly so much more than a bus driver. He’s a mentor to these kids, a light in their eyes. He always goes above and beyond. I’m grateful that he was recognized for what he does.”

Karmanos said Newcamp’s support for the children he drives doesn’t end when he drops them off at the end of the day.

“If one of the kids on his bus has a sporting event, he’ll sign up to drive the team bus so he can be out there to support them,” she said. “One time when I couldn’t make it to one of my daughter’s field hockey games, he sent me text messages with updates about what was happening on the field.”

Karmanos said Newcamp also regularly attends musicals and band performances to show support for “his kids.”

She said “little things” such as decorating his bus and dressing up in costume for holidays demonstrate that “he loves his job and the children he drives.”

“He greets every child and wishes them well,” she said. “I think that really matters to them, especially in today’s world where kids need that kind of support.”

Newcamp thanked his wife Gerri and daughters Natalie and Miranda for their support along with Colleen McCandrew, the bus company manager who hired him for the driving job.

“In a million years I never would have thought that something so special would happen to me,” Newcamp said. “Thanks to all from the bottom of my heart.”

Mary Kay Babyak, the Consortium’s executive director, said it is the people who do so much for students who deserve the thanks.

“Along with our other finalists, all of these professionals contribute both through their work and their examples to support our region’s children and youth,” she said. “We’re delighted to recognize their efforts and we’re just sorry we couldn’t present these awards in person this year.”

The annual awards ceremony had to be conducted virtually this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, she said.

The other recipients of the 2020 Champions of Learning Award are:

- Leadership: Joseph DeMar, a principal in Upper St. Clair School District.
- K-6 Educator: Jerone Morris, a teacher for Pittsburgh Public Schools.
- 7-12 Educator: Jennifer Neill, a teacher in the Laurel Highlands School District.

- Community Partner/Providers: Lora Zemanek, Youth Program Manager for Venture Outdoors.
- Volunteers: Susan Rendulic, South Hills Interfaith Movement.

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