



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 410-767-0100 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT: Bill Reinhard, 410-767-0486**

## **MATTHEW CRAWFORD NAMED 2014 STATEWIDE WINNER OF MARYLAND PARENT INVOLVEMENT MATTERS AWARD**

***FINALISTS ALSO ANNOUNCED AT CEREMONY HONORING PARENT VOLUNTEERS  
FOR POSITIVE IMPACT ON MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

**BALTIMORE (May 16, 2014)** – Dr. Matthew Crawford of Allegany County has been named statewide winner of the seventh annual Maryland Parent Involvement Matters Awards program.

Dr. Crawford, an outstanding volunteer at Flintstone Elementary, is an assistant professor of Chemistry at Frostburg State University. He doesn't use his busy schedule as an excuse not to get involved, but rather has extended his commitment to enrich the educational experiences of Flintstone students. Dr. Crawford has focused much of his attention on increasing student interest and achievement in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), by helping develop "Discovery Days" at the school. These programs engage students in STEM and also integrate Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards. He invites his fellow professors to take part in programs at the school, and frequently invites students to visit FSU to perform experiments in actual lab settings. He also has been an important resource for teachers and staff grateful for his help, enthusiasm, and eagerness to advance STEM education.

Dr. Crawford was selected from five finalists also announced at the award ceremony. The finalists were narrowed down from a list of 24 semifinalists announced earlier this month. In addition to Dr. Crawford, the finalists were:

- Heather Foster, Leonardtown Elementary, St. Mary's County
- Bart Lawrence, Hyattsville Elementary, Prince George's County
- Debbie Boger, Sligo Creek Elementary, Montgomery County
- Hina Naseem and Theresa Yodzis, West Friendship Elementary School, Howard County

"Working together, our State continues to produce real results and make the vital connection between parents, teachers and students at every level of our education system," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Thanks to the many dedicated parents and volunteers across Maryland like Dr. Crawford, Maryland schools ranked best in the nation five years in a row, achieving greater leaps in achievement for low-income students than in any other state in the U.S."

State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery agreed that parent involvement has been critical to Maryland's educational success.

"Matthew Crawford's love of science is contagious, and has infected students at Flintstone Elementary in a unique and positive fashion," Dr. Lowery said. "Strong parental involvement elevates the activity taking place in our classrooms, and Dr. Crawford's work is an outstanding example. He gives back to his school and community with intellect, heart, and soul."

(more)

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## **MATTHEW CRAWFORD NAMED WINNER OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT MATTERS AWARD (Page Two)**

In addition to the finalist and statewide winner announcements, Ernestine Richardson-Watts from Baltimore City was presented with the JoAnne L. Carter Memorial Award in recognition of her special work with Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts. This award is given annually in honor of JoAnne L. Carter, Deputy State Superintendent for the Maryland State Department of Education, who lost her battle with cancer in 2009. A parent herself, Ms. Carter was a staunch advocate for parental involvement in education. The award, sponsored by her family, is given annually to a parent that exemplifies all that she held dear.

Ms. Richardson-Watts organized a food pantry for the students and their families at Augusta Fells Savage, and that work led to using the food pantry to serve members of the community in the school's neighborhood. She didn't just launch the food pantry; she handles everything from dispensing food to stocking shelves, taking inventory, ordering food, and cleaning and sanitizing the facility. She volunteers from early morning until late into the evening.

The Parent Involvement Matters Awards is the nation's first and only statewide award program of its kind. The Maryland State Department of Education's program recognizes parents and guardians for their exceptional support of public education. Parents were nominated for demonstrating significant, positive impact in their communities across five areas of parental involvement: Communication, Volunteering, Learning, Decision Making and Community Collaboration.

The Parent Involvement Matters Awards are supported by the Maryland PTA, Harvest Enterprises, Inc.; Cullins Trucking, Inc; The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, Inc., and Lifetouch Prestige Portraits.

**In addition to Dr. Crawford and Ms. Richardson-Watts, the semifinalists for the Parent Involvement Matters Award were:**

### **2014 Parent Involvement Matters Award (PIMA) Local Honorees**

#### **Brandy Hoot – South Shore Elementary School – Anne Arundel County Public Schools**

Brandy Hoot is the mother of three school-age South Shore students and a parent volunteer extraordinaire. For the past three years, she has served as the school's PTA president, taking it from a fundraising event organization to an organized parent-teacher voice focused on academic program excellence. She has worked to increase communication and connection between South Shore families and the school, helping parents understand and support curricular changes. She assisted students in creating a silent film for an international collaborative film-making project. She encouraged students to create Habitat Hall, a life-size mural to share their knowledge of different habitats. She played a pivotal role in helping the school maintain its Maryland Green School status. Brandy fosters collaboration and teamwork among students, faculty, parents and the larger community.

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### **John Jungwirth – Joppa View Elementary School – Baltimore County Public Schools**

John Jungwirth is the father of two sons who attend Joppa View. Known as “Mr. John” by the entire school community, he is the school’s “jack-of-all-trades.” He volunteers at the school’s book fairs, sports days, field trips and social events. He spends countless hours before, during, and after school to make certain that teachers and students have the resources they need to be successful. No task is too small or too mundane for him to undertake -- from setting up and taking down 500 chairs for evening events, to inventorying and stamping over 18,000 new textbooks for delivery into the classroom. As 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the PTA, John launched its most successful fundraising campaign to date. As a result, the PTA was able to sponsor every event and activity that was planned for the school. He is a man of character, and he sets a positive example for the students every single day.

### **Dianne Kyle – Huntingtown Elementary School – Calvert County Public Schools**

Diane Kyle is the creative force and supervisor of the annual Read-a-Thon fundraiser, “Reading Across Huntingtown,” to promote childhood literacy and to raise money to purchase new equipment for the school. An enormous undertaking, she puts in over 100 hours each year for this program. Since its inception, the Read-a-Thon has generated over \$26,000 to purchase new playground equipment, student laptops and charging stations, and build and outfit an outdoor learning pavilion for students and teachers. She has been on the PTA Executive Board for four years and is the current President. Diane is a gifted communicator and involves the entire community in supporting the school. She also donates her time and talents to Back-to-School events, Breakfast with Santa, Scholastic Book Fairs and the Silent Auction. She is a tireless and passionate advocate for every single child at Huntingtown Elementary School.

### **Nohea Krashoc – Federalsburg Elementary School – Caroline County Public Schools**

Nohea Krashoc is the mother of two young children, one of whom is a kindergarten student at Federalsburg Elementary. She is a member of the PTA and the Parent Advisory Committee and is actively involved in important decisions affecting the school. She has also participated in the Book Fair, field trips, class parties and holiday concerts. When support was needed to help students in the computer labs and to work with them on enrichment skills and independent study, Nohea enthusiastically volunteered. She is in the lab three to four times a week and schedules other parent participation to assure coverage every school day. She is also the Character Counts coach for two kindergarten classes. Young students respond to her ready smile, gentle-nature and unlimited patience. The word “no” isn’t in Nohea Krashoc’s vocabulary. She is helpful, competent, and very willing to help when, and wherever, she can.

### **Aimee Schultz – Cranberry Station Elementary School – Carroll County Public Schools**

Aimee Schultz is the parent of two sons who attend Cranberry Station. She is the current president of the PTA. Under her leadership, the PTA sponsors various events during the year that broaden the cultural horizons of students. She recently led a successful Year Book Project where every student was showcased with multiple photographs. She has expanded fundraising efforts to provide a \$50 reimbursement to every teacher for instructional supplies. Aimee championed an “Artist-In-Residence” program at the school, and she worked with a local website design firm to create a new webpage for community use. She is currently working on a plan to construct an outdoor classroom at the school. Aimee is deeply

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committed to bringing the school family together. She plans monthly family activities, such as movie night, and holds an annual Family Night at a local amusement center. She is the kind of person that builds people up, and she takes pleasure in empowering others to become involved.

**Diana Hawley - North East Elementary School – Cecil County Public Schools**

Diana Hawley is the “go to” person at North East and president of the PTO. Her outstanding communication skills have enabled her to take a diverse group of stakeholders and form an effectively functioning team. She is committed to finding free opportunities for families to be together with a focus on learning and bonding. Under her leadership, the PTO has held a Fall Festival, spaghetti dinner, family movie night, Reading Under the Stars, and the “Laps for Learning” project. Dianne and the PTO conducted parent workshops focused on the Common Core State Standards, Bullying, Cyber-Safety and the support available at the local library. With the School Improvement Team, she was instrumental in developing a system for parents to earn “frequent flyer” points for each school activity they attended. These points could be redeemed for gift cards for use in the community. She also is a student mentor, meeting weekly with a young child to help him to be the best that he can be.

**Virginia (Ginger) Brown – T. C. Martin Elementary School – Charles County Public Schools**

When an application deadline was accelerated by several months, Ginger Brown became the head coach, cheerleading captain and logistics officer for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Lego Robotics Team at T. C. Martin Elementary. She identified tasks, scheduled meetings, rallied parents and community members, and motivated students at the highest level. She recruited parents with technical expertise in software programming and/or engineering to help. Her dedication, drive, and energy were infectious. She spearheaded an effort to have the school community see the recently released Lego movie. Ginger is planning to take the students into the business community to demonstrate robotics. She also plans to start a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade robotics program. Ginger is active in the Girl Scouts, MESA club, Student Council, and local baseball and softball clubs. Oh, in case you are interested, the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Lego Robotics Team was selected as one of three teams to advance to the State First Lego League Championship.

**David Owens – Vienna Elementary School – Dorchester County Public Schools**

David Owens drops his child off at Vienna Elementary every day and often walks him inside to check on his progress. He knows every teacher by name and is quick to volunteer when they need help. He is a great supporter of the school and regularly attends all school functions. David has great empathy for teachers, and he knows how hard they work. He became increasingly concerned watching teachers stand outside on car duty every morning and afternoon, in all types of weather. He understood the need to have teachers on car duty to protect the students, but he kept asking himself if there was anything he could do to protect the teachers from the elements. The idea of the “Shelter Shack” was born. On his own initiative, and with his own money, Mr. Owens designed, constructed and installed a bus-stop-like structure where teachers could shelter from the weather. Because of him, greeting students in the mornings and afternoons is a much more pleasurable experience.

**Margaret Osborne – Whittier Elementary School – Frederick County Public Schools**



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Margaret Osborne has re-energized and re-invigorated the PTA as president at Whittier Elementary. Her focus has been on positive communication, creating opportunities for families to engage and fostering a sense of community within the school. She maintains the PTA's Facebook page and creates a monthly newsletter. Under her leadership, the PTA held a Back-to-School Ice Cream Social, a Fall Harvest Party, and a Multi-Cultural Night, all highly successful events. Due to her tenacity, PTA attendance is the best ever. She serves as parent representative to the student council, helping students find a voice for progress. Margaret also volunteers in the classroom. She works with students who need extra help to succeed and assists teachers with materials for lesson plans. She is an advocate for responsible change and truly represents the school, teachers, students, families, and the community.

### **Sandy Derato – Northern Middle School – Garrett County Public Schools**

Sandy Derato is dedicated to providing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) experiences to students at Northern Middle. She has been a parent mentor for the First Lego League Robotics team for four years and currently is the team's coach. Her middle school team was one of three teams to qualify for the State First Lego League Championship. A tireless fundraiser for the school, she has given her time to four separate fundraising efforts this year. She helped to make the Scholastic Book Fair a success, solicited donations for the fall basket raffle, and chaperoned the school dance. Sandy also gives generously of her time and talents to the local high school. She is the president of the Athletic Booster Club, the event coordinator and the photographer. She has a wonderful rapport with students at both schools. She is a role model and mentor, instilling in students the value of teamwork, the spirit of friendly competition, and the love of learning.

### **Julie Buher – Ring Factory Elementary School – Harford County Public Schools**

Julie Buher is the mother of three children, one a fifth grader at Ring Factory Elementary. As "Homeroom Mother" she can be found planning class celebrations and joining in fun learning activities with the students. She is the parent advisor to the Student Council, the school yearbook coordinator, and photographer. She helps plan the Teacher Appreciation week and organizes the hospitality room. Julie is "Mrs. PTA," serving on the elementary, middle and high school PTAs. A member of Ring Factory's PTA for 14 years, Julie has served on numerous committees and has been Treasurer and President. She organized the Harvest Party and the Spring Fling. She created "Pajama Night" to provide parents with affordable childcare for a night and also coordinates "Laps for Learning" to provide funds for grade level field trips. She does whatever it takes to meet the needs of the school community.

### **Theresa Yodzis and Hina Naseem – West Friendship Elementary School – Howard County Public Schools**

Theresa Yodzis and Hina Naseem co-chair the West Friendship PTA Community Outreach committee, which provides opportunities for student service in the community. A dynamic duo, they plan and implement monthly compassionate caring opportunities for students and their families to "give back" to the community. They organized "Soles for Souls," where students collected shoes for the needy around the world. Students showed off their culinary skills by providing dinner for the local volunteer fire station along with cards and letters of appreciation. They provided seasonal entertainment at a local retirement center. Military troops received Halloween candy, coupons, and thank you cards and letters. Towels and blankets were collected for the local animal shelter. Gifts of bibs, booties and bonnets were sent to the

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Neonatal Unit at Johns Hopkins Hospital. These ladies find endless opportunities for students and families to share their time and talents to make a difference in the lives of others.

### **Christopher Maier – Worton Elementary School – Kent County Public Schools**

Christopher Maier is the father of two Worton Elementary students. He has served on the Parent Advisory Council, PTA Executive Team, School Improvement Team, and as a parent volunteer. He tutors students, monitors the halls, and helps with lunch duty. Concerned about school safety, he spearheaded the launch of a “WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students) program at Worton. An initiative of the National Center for Fathering, WATCH D.O.G.S. raise the level of engagement between children and important men in their lives. Christopher recruited over 30 dedicated dads to join the program. Father volunteers dramatically increased by 70%. He is responsible for scheduling the calendars, for communicating between volunteers and staff, and is the chief fundraiser for the program. WATCH D.O.G.S. supply that extra set of eyes, ears and strong hands in the classroom. Every Worton student has benefited from the enhanced presence of positive male role models in the school.

### **Debbie Boger – Sligo Creek Elementary School – Montgomery County Public Schools**

When Sligo Creek lost its science teacher and lab, a need was created. Debbie Boger was the “force of nature” that filled that need. She saw a large, under-utilized interior courtyard and envisioned an Outdoor Classroom. Debbie rallied the PTAs of both Sligo Creek Elementary and Silver Spring International Middle School to support the cause. She championed the project before school system officials and won approval. She worked with teachers and students on the design and developed partnerships with local designers, construction professionals and businesses to make the project affordable. She created an educational foundation to solicit and accept funding. The transformation of the space into a living classroom has been dramatic. Last year an edible garden was successfully planted and this year students are planning to grow enough crops to donate produce to a local food pantry. Debbie is now busy on the next phase of the project -- which will incorporate a stage, a pond and a stone garden.

### **Bart Lawrence – Hyattsville Elementary School – Prince George’s County Public Schools**

Bart Lawrence is a change agent. As its President for four years, he has revitalized the PTA at Hyattsville Elementary and transformed the school into one that reflects the rich diversity of the community. He recognized that communication was key, having all PTA agendas, minutes, announcements and notices translated into Spanish and providing translators at all meetings and events. Local print and social media are used effectively to “market” the school to the larger community. Parents and the community have responded enthusiastically. “Garden and Grounds” events are held to beautify the school grounds. Family Movie Night is free and open to the community. A Free Little Library has been created where students, parents and the community can donate books or take books for their reading pleasure. An annual native plant sale, fully embraced by the community, provides major funding for afterschool enrichment programs. Bart has changed Hyattsville Elementary into a true “neighborhood school.”

### **Peg Donovan – Grasonville Elementary School – Queen Anne’s County Public Schools**

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Peg Donovan is spearheading the effort to see Grasonville Elementary become an accredited “Green School.” A major undertaking, Peg has been highly successful in garnering the involvement of teachers, students, parents and community organizations. Named after “Gracie,” the school’s black lab mascot, Peg’s GRACIE Project raises awareness and community interaction with the environment. Students have started a recycling program, transformed an outdoor courtyard into a sustainable ecosystem classroom, and initiated Wetland Restoration projects, including oyster restoration and wetland reconstruction. Peg is GRACIE’s grant writer and fundraising leader. In addition, she is a Character Counts coach, assists with the school’s Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program, and supports all “fun-raising” events, including the Art Fair, holiday shopping store, and annual Boo Run and Turkey Trot.

### **Heather Foster – Leonardtown Elementary School – St. Mary’s County Public Schools**

Heather Foster is the mother of a second grader at Leonardtown Elementary. In December 2012, it came to Heather’s attention that without the benefit of the school breakfast and lunch program, some children would go hungry over the two-week winter break. Heather quickly pulled together enough non-perishable food and food gift cards to confidentially feed those school families in need. With Heather’s passion and vision, this small giving project has grown into the parent-run Leonardtown Elementary School (LES) Outreach Program, which has become a household name in the community. The use of technology is a major reason the program is so successful. Utilizing a software application called “Sign Up Genius,” Heather publishes a monthly list of basic needs and, as supporters select what they will provide, the list is updated. For Heather and her volunteers, no request is too big or too small. The LES program has supplied food, clothing, free doctor visits, furniture, and even heating oil.

### **Benita Rashaw – Greenwood Elementary School – Somerset County Public Schools**

Benita Rashaw is the mother of a first grade student at Greenwood Elementary. She has been the driving force behind a unique partnership with students from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore who volunteer to read to the students and to share their vibrant, upbeat, “can do” attitude. From this interaction, for the first time, many Greenwood Elementary students begin to see themselves in college and begin to dream that all things are possible. Benita is the secretary of the PTO and has organized Book Fairs, Holiday Bazaars and the Teacher Appreciation Week. She is a member of the School Improvement Team and the Early Learning/Transitions Committee. She developed and initiated an email/phone tree to keep other parents up-to-date and involved and is frequently a classroom Guest Reader. She is always recruiting other parents to get involved and is a dedicated fundraiser for the school.

### **Maggie Gowe – St. Michaels Elementary School – Talbot County Public Schools**

As President of the PTA, Maggie Gowe has increased membership to its highest level, earning it recognition by the Maryland PTA for “biggest increase in membership” during 2012-2013. The PTA has tripled its cash holdings due to her chairmanship of the school’s largest fundraiser-- Bingo Night. Maggie serves as the parent representative on the Talbot County Citizen Advisory Committee and has established open communication among parents, teachers, the administration and the community. She manages the school’s Facebook page and led a petition drive to engage parents in the selection of the next local Superintendent. She brings her dog, Wally, to school as part of the Pets On Wheels program. She has organized Daddy-Daughter dances, Mother-Son events, and started a booster club. Maggie also serves in the greater

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community as a Character Counts coach at St. Michaels High School and is a liaison to CarePacks, Talbot County's weekend food program for students in need.

### **Steve O'Farrell – Fountaindale School for the Arts and Academic Excellence – Washington County Public Schools**

Steve O'Farrell is the father of two students at the Fountaindale School. Because of his drive and dedication, the school has a new outdoor Wetlands Learning lab. His goal was to get students excited about making inquiries, designing investigations, answering questions and advocating for environmental literacy. He recruited volunteers, chaired organizational meetings, secured funding, advocated for partners, and was a "hands-on" participant during construction. He now leads the effort to begin a stream restoration project and to expand the current learning lab. Steve was a major contributor to the school's CORE Community group, which was created to strengthen the connection between school and community and resulted in Fountaindale's attainment of fully affirmed status as part of the Coalition of Essential Schools. He led the creation of successful afterschool academies including a STEM/Science Fair Club, a basketball program, a spelling club, a sign language club, and a student-led knitting club.

### **Courtney Deason – Wicomico Middle School – Wicomico County Public Schools**

As a member of the Parent Advisory Committee, Courtney Deason is a strong advocate for parent involvement. Recognizing that transitioning into middle school can be daunting, she has been instrumental in hosting a 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Orientation Event. Each year, the 6<sup>th</sup> graders and their families come together to receive critical information about the middle school experience. Courtney is also the liaison with the community, building partnerships with local businesses to sponsor an "Arts in the Park" recognition event. Student artwork was showcased throughout the Park and parents and community members were encouraged to appreciate the art, meet with teachers and students, enjoy student performances, and take part in a student-led art project to create a unity quilt. She is currently developing a partnership with the soon-to-open Rivers Edge Art Community and will be looking for ways for students and teachers to take part in art classes, theatre projects and gallery space.

### **Brent Gould – Snow Hill Middle School – Worcester County Public Schools**

Brent Gould is the mother of two students at Snow Hill Middle. One of her goals as PTA President was to create one major fundraiser that could become an annual community event. And thus, "The Pig and a Jig – BBQ Festival" was born. She planned the entire event, solicited community donations, recruited volunteers, arranged entertainment and transportation, and involved students and teachers. Her husband helped with marketing and promotion. This fun-filled event raised over \$5,000 that was used to buy science lab materials, sewing machines and classroom supplies. Brent is planning an even bigger Festival for this year, expecting to bring in families from around the State for the two-day event and double the school's revenues. Her hard work has had a major impact on the school and is bringing major recognition to the community. She is also planning to establish an educational foundation to receive additional funds that will provide enrichment programs and support for Snow Hill students and teachers.

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