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Caledonia Community Schools counselor named West Michigan Counselor of the Year

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – **Bari Kane**, counselor for **Caledonia Community Schools (CCS)**, has been named West Michigan Counselor of the Year by the West Michigan Counseling Association.

Kane has worked at CCS for 18 years and is a counselor at Duncan Lake Middle School. She was previously a fourth-grade classroom teacher at Paris Ridge Elementary.

“We couldn’t be more proud of Bari for achieving this honor and serving all of our students so well,” said Dr. **Dedrick Martin**, superintendent of Caledonia Community Schools. “As mental health issues have become so prevalent in school-age children and technology and social media have presented new challenges, we’re lucky to have such a dedicated and caring counselor at CCS.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1 in 3 high school students had experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness in 2019, a 40 percent increase since 2009. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated mental health issues affecting students. As the number of school-age children reporting poor mental health increases, having effective and passionate counselors in school has grown more important.

The West Michigan Counseling Association is a nonprofit dedicated to the growth and enhancement of the counseling profession.

“Bari Kane is a compassionate professional who works hard to make sure that students and families receive the right support at the right time,” said **Katie Dorband**, student support coordinator at CCS, in Kane’s nomination submission. “She is an incredible asset to the counseling community.”

Dorband described Kane as someone who brings people with different perspectives together. She is always willing to try new ideas and adapt to the ever-changing educational environment, removing barriers to student achievement and health. Kane is also a champion for integrating mental health and behavior into the Multi-Tiered System of Supports, which is a research-based strategy designed to meet the individual needs of the whole child in schools.

“I’m honored to receive this award from the West Michigan Counseling Association,” Kane said. “The mental health and wellness of our students at CCS is a top priority and incorporating evidence-based mental health practices into everything we do leads to better outcomes for our students at school and into the future.”