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Plano Senior High School's Karen Wilbanks Inducted into Texas Forensic Association Hall of Fame

Speech Teacher Describes Honor as a "Team Plano" Award

(Plano, Texas--October 22, 2009) Karen Wilbanks, speech teacher and coach at Plano Senior High School, was recently inducted into the Texas Forensic Association (TFA) Hall of Fame. Ms. Wilbanks, the TFA president, was surprised with the esteemed honor at the October meeting, held in conjunction with the annual Texas Speech Communications Association (TSCA) conference in Dallas.

"This award was a complete surprise as it usually is awarded posthumously or to people who are close to retirement," said Ms. Wilbanks, "Luckily, I fit neither of those categories."

She emphasized, "The type of achievement represented by this award is only possible because of the complete support of the Plano Independent School District, Principal Dr. Doyle Dean, Coaches Cheryl Potts and Patti Weinbrenner with whom I work, and the incredible students of Plano Senior High School. I see it as a 'Team Plano' award."

Ms. Wilbank's induction into the Hall of Fame honors her TFA service, leadership and her excellence in coaching. As a PSHS teacher for 16 years, her students have won numerous state and national team and individual awards, and the speech program has more than tripled in size.

She has held numerous TFA offices including vice president-elect and vice-president. In support of her presidency and speech education, Plano ISD Superintendent Dr. Doug Otto is serving on the TFA Executive Council.

"I am so honored to have Dr. Otto serving on this Council," she said. "It is another indicator of how awesome Plano is and how generous Dr. Otto is with his time."

Ms. Wilbanks, an educator with 24 years of teaching experience, has previously coached debate and is currently coaching duet acting, drama interpretation, original oratory and poetry interpretation.

Kathy Kuddes, Plano ISD director of fine arts, stated, "Karen Wilbanks is an outstanding speech teacher and coach. Her passion for her subject and her students is obvious in all that she does. The PSHS speech team has become a dominant force in Texas and across the nation under her leadership."



Ms. Wilbanks explained, “In Plano ISD, our speech programs are successful because we teach fundamentals in classes during the school day. These concepts include how to choose a script and how to create a character. We also teach to the whole student with instruction on how to present oneself’s successfully. The coaching, which occurs before school, during lunch and after school, is an extension of the classroom work.”

Michael Urie, star of the popular television show “Ugly Betty” is one of Ms. Wilbanks’ former national champions. Former students Michael Washington, Brandon Weinbrenner and Joel Rainwater, are performing professionally in the theater, television and movies.

PSHS graduates excelling in professions such as business and law frequently tell their teacher how useful their speech knowledge is to their careers. One of her students shared that he is using his speech skills as an interrogator in the army.

Ms. Wilbanks and husband, Frank, are the parents of two daughters--an attorney in Texas and an actress in Chicago.

The Plano Independent School District (Plano ISD) – <http://www.pisd.edu/> – endeavors to foster the highest level of student learning. The mission of Plano ISD is to provide an excellent education for all students. Plano ISD is located 20 miles north of Dallas, Texas and serves the residents of approximately 100 square miles in southwest Collin County, including 66 square miles in the city of Plano, northern portions of the cities of Dallas and Richardson and parts of the cities of Allen, Parker and Murphy. Plano ISD employs 7,000 faculty and staff members who serve more than 55,000 students in 70 schools and 11 service facilities. Participating in Plano ISD schools enables students to adapt to new learning opportunities throughout their lives, collaborate with, and contribute to, the global community and to be creative and disciplined in their thinking.

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