



New Challenges and Opportunities

2018 WASB President Mary Jo Rozmenoski has been a life-long advocate for youth

It was great to connect with so many of you at our 2018 Joint State Education Convention in January. For those of you who I didn't meet and for our many new school board members, I'd like to introduce myself.

I've spent the majority of my professional career working on behalf of youth at Head Start. Through Head Start, I worked directly with families in north-western Wisconsin with the goal of reducing barriers to success.

After more than 30 years at Head Start, I became a justice council and community services coordinator for Jackson County. In that work, I focused on establishing collaborative relationships among the public and private sectors to create and evaluate alternatives to incarceration for non-violent, addiction-related offenses and ensure that offenders provided meaningful community service and found paid employment.

Today, I'm happy to continue working on behalf of area youth as president of the Black River Falls School Board, member of the CESA 4 Board of Control, and president of the WASB. In addition, I work part time for Western Technical College and as a respite care provider for a young woman with whom I've worked with for more than 30 years.

I'm also very proud of the work

I've done as an organ donor advocate. In 2005, my husband and I lost the younger of our two children — 23-year-old Dustin — to a tragic traffic accident. We immediately honored his choice to be an organ and tissue donor. Successful transplants included his heart, liver, pancreas, both kidneys, and corneas.

Later that year, I worked with the woman who had received Dustin's liver to begin advocating for organ donation. Since then, we have spoken to medical professionals, first responders, students in driver education programs, media and community members, reaching more than 10,000 people nationwide.

This year, I look forward to new challenges and opportunities serving as president of the WASB. I am prepared to meet the challenges and am motivated and energized, along with you, to keep the WASB moving forward by constantly coming back to our grounding statement of "Supporting, Promoting and Advancing Public Education."

I want to say thank you to all my fellow board members, education professionals, community and family members and students for adding value and confidence with the common thread we share — each one of us cares and supports excellence in education. There is no right answer to all of the challenges we face together.

The answers lie in the work and commitment of working together and within our own local school boards of education to engage all our stakeholders.

Schools cannot respond to all the challenges alone. When we actively come together, participate in initiatives, and demand excellence in public education, we are strengthening our capacity as individuals to improve the quality of our communities.

As May 2018 gets in full swing, there is no greater honor and reminder for a school board member of why we do what we do than to be present at our local graduation ceremony. As the graduates walk across the stage, having completed requirements set forth by our districts and with the skills and resources necessary to build their lives through continuing education, public service and careers, they are walking into a wide open future of opportunities.

I look forward to participating with you at the many professional development opportunities throughout the year that the WASB offers. ■

Mary Jo Rozmenoski is the president of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, president of the Black River Falls School Board, and a member of the CESA 4 Board of Control.

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