



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Superintendent Arntzen and Commissioner Ray Shaw Honor Montana's Military-Friendly Schools and Community Members

HELENA – The [Montana Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission](#) (MIC3) and Superintendent Arntzen are proud to announce Montana's Purple Star Schools and Purple Star Champions Awardees for 2023-2024.

Montana's 2023-2024 Purple Star School Awardees are:

- Valley Christian School, Missoula, MT (renewal)
- Loy Elementary School, Great Falls, MT (renewal)
- North Middle School, Great Falls, MT (renewal)
- CMR High School, Great Falls, MT (renewal)
- Washington Middle School, Glendive, MT

The 2023- 2024 Purple Star Champion Awardees are:

- **Nick Budeski**, CMR High School Counselor, Great Falls, MT. Nick has been teaching for 14 years. He has served as a warehouse driver, an English and Resource teacher, a school within a school specialist, and a counselor. Nick takes great pride in serving military families and supporting military career exploration in his current role as a counselor at CMR High School. He has extensive connections in the community and works with every military branch in Great Falls to provide students opportunities for career exploration within the military. Nick oversees the CMR Student2Student (S2S) new student support club, which takes special care to help new military students transition into CMR.



- **Jamie Williams**, CMR High School Librarian and Instructional Coach, Great Falls, MT. Jamie has been a librarian in Great Falls Public Schools for 18 years at CMR. She also specializes as a part-time instructional coach. Jamie supports students, staff, and parents with technology needs, engagement strategies, online learning platforms, and research needs. She also engages with students through extracurricular activities like 4H and Leadership High School. Jamie takes great pride and goes out of her way to help coordinate activities with Malmstrom Air Force Base, specifically to support newly arrived military families and their students transition to CMR and be academically successful.



- **Lisa Sapp**, Malmstrom Air Force Base, School Liaison, Great Falls, MT. Lisa is a Department of the Air Force School Liaison for the 341st Missile Wing, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana. As the only active-duty military base in the state, Sapp serves as the total force education navigator for approximately 10,000 military-connected students statewide. She is the primary point of contact as the base subject matter expert for highly mobile students in transition. Her position is crucial in identifying academic barriers and in developing real-time solutions that enhance educational opportunities with thriving local



community and state-level partnerships.

The [Purple Star Award](#) distinguishes Montana schools and individual champions who have displayed extraordinary commitment to supporting our military students and their families. To qualify as a Purple Star School, each school must meet specific designation criteria and be given support through the state and national Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission to continue the strong support of our military-connected students and families. This is the fourth year MIC3 and OPI will be recognizing Montana's military-friendly schools with the **Purple Star School Award**. This is the third year recognizing and awarding **Montana Purple Star Champions**.

"We are all Montana proud of these Purple Star Schools and Champions," **said Superintendent Elsie Arntzen**. "These schools were chosen for their dedication to the children of families that have sacrificed so much for our state and our nation. Join me in honoring these schools and community members as they put Montana students first!"

"The Montana Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission takes great pride in highlighting the dedicated individuals in our communities who go the extra mile to support our military children and families," **said Commissioner Ray Shaw**. "Recognizing that the needs of military families can sometimes be overlooked, this award plays a crucial role in uplifting both our military families and those who work tirelessly to serve them."

The 2022-2023 Purple Star School Awardees were the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, Great Falls High School, Chief Joseph Elementary School, Meadowlark Elementary School, and the Early Learning Family Center. The Purple Star Champions were Brian Holbein, Lt. Col (R), Michael Wonch, MSgt (R), and Col. Christopher Karns.

The Purple Star School designation lasts three years at which time the school is eligible for redesignation. These schools have gone above and beyond being military friendly, through a maintained commitment to serve their military students and continually honor the military family sacrifice.

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Questions? Contact:

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