

Kessel nationally awarded as career ends



Julia Kessel and her son all smiles as they pose with her award | Kessel

Chinese Teacher recognized for 19 years of hard work

by Jesse McCauley

From the beginning, MCL teacher Julia Kessel always knew she wanted to be a teacher. As a China native, being a teacher was one of the most well-respected professions.

During the Cultural Revolution in China, many schools closed, so this was the perfect time for Kessel to begin her dream. She brought other kids over to her house and had lessons of her own.

Now, after nineteen years at New Trier, Kessel received the 2017 Outstanding Chinese Teacher award, a national award given to teachers who show excellence in their classroom. Kessel cannot think of a better way to end her career.

“I’m excited, not only because of the award, but because this is my last year. I’m excited because this is the right time,” Kessel said.

In order to apply for this award, Kessel needed to submit several documents including letters of recommendation and fifteen minute

lesson video. One of her letters of recommendation came from Modern & Classical Language Department Chair Lorri Starck-King, who has nothing but high regard for her colleague.

“She has built this program and expanded it to the point where we now have two and a half teachers. The summer trip was a huge addition as well, but what inspires me most about her is that she continues to learn,” said Starck-King.

Kessel believed that her video submission was crucial in showing her technique and skill. Out of the many national submissions, she was able to stand out.

“What they really admired about that video was that she was engaging her students in critical thinking. It wasn’t just ‘let’s play with the language,’ it was, ‘let’s think about the ideas behind this question,’” said Starck-King.

The presentation was a quick preview of what Kessel has been doing everyday for her entire career. Much of her high praise stems from her students.

Senior Drew Ali had her as a teacher for his sophomore and junior years. “She is a very special

teacher. She always made sure I felt comfortable and could succeed in her class. Our class became like a family because of her,” said Ali.

Senior Hunter Kingsbury was also in Kessel’s class for the past two years. Like Ali, Kingsbury noticed the passion that Kessel displays in each period.

“She makes the class engaging by caring for all her students. She has distinct rules but gains the students’ respect. She was the best teacher I’ve had,” said Kingsbury.

With both the award and the retirement, Kessel has received an overwhelming amount of attention. She said that even past students and parents have congratulated her and have expressed their gratitude, as well as her friends and family back at home.

“Whether it be with kids or adults, she builds this great rapport. She always has a ton of SILC students because they see her as not just a teacher, but as a mentor,” said Starck-King.

The immense admiration for Kessel will make it more difficult for those she affected to say goodbye.

“It’s sad to see her go, but she deserves it because she has worked really hard for so long. I just wish other people could experience the fun of being in one of her classes,” said Kingsbury.

Kessel plans to spend a lot of time with her family once retired. Her 96 year-old mother is still living in China. She also wants to spend time with her granddaughter and her son, who encouraged her every step of the way.

Not only will she enjoy her time off, she also promises to continue advocating for Chinese teaching. “I will continue to share my knowledge and expertise to the entire nation of teachers,” said Kessel.

At the end of her career, Kessel has nothing but gratitude for New Trier. She credits her success to the community.

“I have to give credit to my team, my administrators, Ms. Chao, and my highly motivated students and their parents. This is a team effort. New Trier’s variety of resources and facilities gave me this opportunity.”

Changes coming to dance

Trevapalooza to more closely resemble a festival

by Rhea Mech

The annual winter dance, Trevapalooza, will no longer be dubbed a dance, but a festival and will now host other activities on top of the traditional music and dancing.

This change was decided on by members of Global Exchange Club, which has planned the winter dance for years.

“Not everyone likes a dance,” said Global Exchange club sponsor Moira Gitau. “It seems like dances are just for a specific group of people, so we are trying to offer a different experience to meet everyone’s interests.”

While the Trevapalooza Festival will still be held in the Winnetka campus’ gyms, the layout for the event will be different from past dances.

This new concept includes one main stage with an art station, game station, a photo booth, and inflatables scattered around, and, of course, a VIP area for seniors.

“It’s important to think of everyone’s wants and not just assume that everyone wants to dance. People like to interact and socialize in many ways,” said senior and co-head of the Global Exchange club board Julie Resnick.

Other students, like junior Annie Lee, agree that options have been limited in past school dances she has gone to.

“Having the dance be this way is probably better, because if you don’t want to dance the whole time, there are more things to do to make it more fun, so everyone doesn’t leave 0.2 seconds after they get there,” said Lee.

The school is always trying to keep students to stay to the end of the dance, and activities may contribute to longer stay.

“This new layout allows for students to stay occupied and have fun in more ways that one could imagine,” said Resnick.

Sophomore Mark Von Den

Steinen, on the other hand, believes the planners of the dances should not try so hard to keep students at the events.

“I think they should just keep it simple because no one really cared about the dance at homecoming,” said Von Den Steinen, who admits to leaving past dances after a short amount of time.

“The whole point is to socialize and dance. You don’t go to a dance for the arts and crafts,” said Von Den Steinen.

While some may think the new additions to the night are excessive, others believe they will be memorable for those that pursue the chance to try new things.

“I believe this will open the eyes of schools around us neighborhood to see that this festival-like dance can only make one’s experience more memorable,” said Resnick.

Other schools have already shifted to having a similar experience, according to Gitau. The Global Exchange Club members decided to add more activities to the winter dance after the entertainment company, Boom, that has been the DJ for many years, offered the new entertainment package to the school.

“We got to choose which events to include in our dance,” said Gitau. The club was able to customize and tailor each activity to match the interests of the students.

Moving forward, the planners of Trevapalooza hope to collaborate with students who are not in the Global Exchange Club, like having student DJ’s perform, and photographers and film students make a promotional video for the night, said Gitau, to make the night more unique.

But as for more current changes, the price of the ticket remains the same, as well as the attire for the night.

“Maybe someday the clothing choice will change,” added Gitau, “so the sophomores and freshmen aren’t as uncomfortable while trying to dance and jump around.”

“The purpose of a school dance in modern day is to be a mixer, like a lot of people having fun together and meeting new folks,” said Junior Riley Needham.

Anchor clubs collaborate and hold first Winter Week

Week-long event organized to spread school spirit

by Katie Kim

New Trier’s anchor clubs held a week-long, first-time collaborative event called Winter Week, celebrating the chilly time of the year, ending with the Snowy Scrounge.

Winter Week encouraged students to dress according to a theme of the day. Monday was Cozy Day, hosted by Girls club; Tuesday was Fun Flannel Day, hosted by Student Alliance; Wednesday, hosted by Social Service Board, was Tie-Dye; Tri-Ship hosted Olympic Day on Thursday, and Pep Club encouraged students to sport their spirit wear on Friday.

Pep Club started this event, collaborating with other anchor clubs for the first time, in hopes of celebrating school spirit.

This event was also a good opportunity for sophomores and juniors to become more acquainted with the different anchor clubs: they include Girls club, Student Alliance, Social Service board, Tri-Ship, and Pep Club.



Student Alliance treasurer Elena Cata and member Jason Kaminski |Guthrie

“Winter gets people down so we wanted to do something fun to pick up people’s spirit,” said kinetic wellness teacher and Pep Club sponsor Kathryn Kalnes. “And to spread school spirit, of course.”

Activities Leadership Practicum Seminar (ALPS) member and Pep Club president, senior Alaina Vivian, shared that “it made the most sense to collaborate with the other anchor clubs. In our ALPS meeting, we

was an easy and accessible way for students to come to the scrounge and be enlightened about what goes on in each club and information about upcoming events/deadlines if they are interested in joining.”

“Not only does it bring service to the ones being served, but it gives us students the opportunity to learn to serve others. The club itself makes these services extremely accessible. It’s amazing because the act of helping is right at your fingertips,” added Social Service board co-president, senior Brian Butler.

The co-president of Social Service board, senior Grace Lyman, said that starting a new club here at New Trier is doable but can be intimidating. “Here at Social Service board, we make it easy to start a club, making it easy to put yourself in a leadership role.”

Student Activities Coordinator and Student Alliance co-sponsor Stacy Kolack shared, “I’m blown away by all the different things these students can do. Student Alliance’s main goal has always been and always will be to promote and create positive change for the students here at New Trier. These changes being made are impressive to witness because they go through with them.”

Student Alliance applications are now open until Feb. 16. Forms are outside each club room door and on the New Trier website as well.

However, there were some “hiccups” throughout the week. “Since this year was the first year organizing this week long event, hiccups were bound to occur, so it’s understandable. However, I would definitely like to see more collaborative work,”said Lyman.

Butler added on by saying “I think it was just a matter of timing, for both the students participating and not participating in the event.”

On the other hand, “part of the reason why Winter Week was held at this time was because we wanted to recognize Founder’s day. There are also records showing it was a snowy day, so it’s always nice to celebrate the day this school began its education,” Kolack said.

“My favorite part about Winter Week was just seeing the collaboration happen. This was the first time we’ve tried something like this and it was a good beginning; I look forward to seeing what comes of collaborative work between clubs in the future,” said Kalnes.