



Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA) 2018 Rural Advocacy Award

Heather DuBois Bourenane | [Wisconsin Public Education Network](#)



Heather DuBois Bourenane was honored by the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA), a non-profit organization that is dedicated to helping address challenges faced by rural school districts, at the annual Rural Schools Conference on October 29, 2018.

Heather DuBois Bourenane has been the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Public Education Network for nearly five years. In that time, she took this loose affiliation of education groups from a random bunch of atoms colliding haphazardly in the ether to a coalesced molecule of organizations working

toward the goal of improving the state of Public Education in Wisconsin.

To make this group's voice heard, Heather and many of her members attended and testified at every Blue-Ribbon Commission hearing across the state this past year advocating for better funding to restore the quality of education in this state to something that truly prepares students to be productive citizens. This voice was strong and heard!

Heather hosts a Summer Summit to give parents, teachers and all education advocates a chance to come together just before school starts to learn, share and get re-charged for the new year. In the planning process Heather opened the meeting with this quote, "Welcome to all who agree that every child in Wisconsin deserves an equally excellent public education." With those words Heather created 'one team' out of hundreds of public-school advocates in Appleton, Wisconsin that would go on to connect, learn and plan for WPEN's 2018 theme, #VotePublic.

While Heather's work is not directly aimed at rural schools, the rural and urban voices that she has brought to Madison to speak on behalf of their schools is having an impact. When Heather is around you know what her passion is by the t-shirts worn by the WPEN supporters that read, **Love your Public Schools.**

Other award winners honored by WIRSA at the Rural Schools Conference were Ashley Furniture Industries of Arcadia, Rural Business Partner of the Year; Dan Viste, Southern Door County School District, Rural Support Staff Person of the Year; Steve Pate of Portage, Rural Board of Education Member of the Year; Bryce Bird, District Administrator of the Riverdale School District, Rural Administrator of the Year; and Justin Gerlach, teacher in the Mishicot School District, Rural Teacher of the Year.

The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance was formed to help rural school districts address the unique issues that affect rural schools as they seek to achieve the highest quality education for every student. Members include a cross-section of administrators, educators, school board members, post-secondary representatives, rural community members, business leaders, and other concerned individuals who want a strong voice for rural education.