

Golden Day At Lovejoy School: Music Teacher Zebulon Holder Gets Apple Award For Excellence Surprise

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - It was a Golden Day on Monday morning at Lovejoy Elementary School in Alton. Not only was it beautiful outside with bright sunshine, but inside there was a surprise presentation of a Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Teaching to music teacher Zebulon Holder. Holder is one of 10 Golden Apple Award recipients in Illinois.

The Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Teaching recognize and honor outstanding teachers for their roles in having lasting, positive effects on students' lives and building stronger communities. Zebulon Holder is one of 10 award recipients in Illinois.

Zeb thanked the Golden Apple people who presented him the award and said he was "shocked" and "surprised" and so thankful.

“Thank you so much for this honor,” Zeb said. “It is an amazing opportunity.”

Alton Schools Superintendent Kristie Baumgartner said this was a huge honor for Zeb and he is certainly deserving.

“I can’t think of a more deserving teacher than Zeb,” she said. “Zeb gives his heart and soul to his students each and every day. He has inspired the love of music in so many of our elementary students. This is literally one of the most prestigious awards you can receive as an educator and we are so happy Zeb is receiving the honor today.”

Lovejoy Principal John Ducey said Zeb loves the kids and the kids love his classes.

“The kids are so excited when they have the music classes,” the principal said. “We are so proud of Zeb. He was kind of a pioneer for other music teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic because he always had a backup plan online. If they couldn’t make it live, you could link and the information was there.”

Following a highly competitive process, the 2021 teaching award recipients were selected from a record-setting 708 nominations of Pre-K-3rd grade teachers.

Caroline Dileonardi, a Golden Apple representative, was on hand with much personal excitement, and said she was extremely proud to honor Zeb Holder on Monday morning.

“He is so deserving of this award and we are really excited to honor him today,” she said.

Each award recipient receives a \$5,000 cash award and a spring sabbatical provided by Northwestern University at no cost. Award recipients also become Fellows of the Golden Apple Academy of Educators, a community of educators who play an important role in preparing the next generation of teachers in the Golden Apple Scholars and Accelerators programs - which are dedicated to addressing the teacher shortage in Illinois.

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