



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anchorage Teacher Valerie Baalerud Receives Milken Educator Award

ANCHORAGE -- Valerie Baalerud, a history teacher at Eagle River High School in Anchorage, has received the 2017-18 Alaska Milken Educator Award, a prestigious national recognition. Baalerud, who was honored in a surprise ceremony this morning at her school, will receive a \$25,000 award.

“Great teachers change lives, inspire excellence, and shape the future,” said Alaska Education Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson in a statement. “Valerie Baalerud demonstrates the high level of talent and dedication that creates the environment where students learn and thrive. As an Advanced Placement teacher, Valerie builds a learning community where she enthusiastically engages, helps, and inspires students and finds ways for them to succeed. Her well-deserved honor reflects on all of our teachers and on the importance of having highly effective, dynamic educators in every classroom as we provide an excellent education for every student every day.”

Blue ribbon committees in participating states review candidates for the Milken Family Foundation. Milken recipients are chosen for their educational talent, educational accomplishments beyond the classroom, potential for professional and policy leadership, and an engaging and inspiring presence.

In awarding Ms. Baalerud, the Milken Family Foundation cited:

Valerie Baalerud treats her students like historians, demanding rigorous thought and analysis, emphasizing primary source texts and historical photographs, and helping them connect the dots between historical events and current approaches to geopolitical issues. She goes out of her way to infuse character education into her curriculum, harnessing students’ curiosity, exposing them to different points of view and challenging them to advocate for their beliefs.

Baalerud is known to work tirelessly to ensure the success of all students. Her AP World students score at the national average on the AP exam, and Baalerud’s overall student failure rate is zero. The chair of the history department, Baalerud has coached Model United Nations, flag football and track; led the school’s celebration of National History Day; and advised Eagle River’s student government. She also coaches the Drama, Debate and Forensics (DDF) club and

produces some of the most competitive debaters in the district. Seniors chose Baalerud to give their graduation address in just her third year of teaching.

Baalerud earned her bachelor of arts degree in history and master of arts degree in teaching in 2011 from the University of Alaska Anchorage.

For more information about the Milken Family Foundation visit www.mff.org. For Eagle River High School, contact Principal Martin Lang at 907-742-2700.

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