

JEFFERSON — Ashe County Schools announced its 2021-22 Employees of the Year for the district on May 25. Among those recognized were Teacher of the Year Holly McClure, Classified Employee of the Year Kayla Moore, Beginning Teacher of the Year Charlene Horton and Supervisory Support Staff Employee of the Year Julie Jones.

McClure is an Exceptional Children's teacher at Ashe County Middle School where she has taught for 11 years. She is completing her 26th year of teaching and throughout her career she has also taught at Wilkes Developmental Day School, Ashe County Career Center and Ashe County High School.



“In her TOY interview, Mrs. McClure passionately articulated her love and care for her students,” said Superintendent Dr. Eisa Cox. “She is a true advocate for all students and believes and expects that all students grow and learn every day – and they do. Every child who has Mrs. McClure receives a personalized education. She is positive, growth minded, and student centered.”

“I cannot think of anyone more deserving of Ashe County's Teacher of the Year than Mrs. McClure,” said ACMS Principal Dustin Farmer. “I do not believe that Mrs. McClure chose to be an Exceptional Children's teacher, but rather accepted the calling. This is evident through her love, care, and compassion for the students she serves. She has led the EC Department at ACMS for many years.

Administration has consistently relied on Mrs. McClure year after year to help create the master schedule. She is a ray of sunshine to our staff, and the students she serves each day. We are so fortunate to have Mrs. McClure at ACMS, and are proud that she was chosen to represent Ashe County Schools as the Teacher of the Year.”

Moore is currently the receptionist at Ashe County High School where she routinely assists administrators and staff, as well as students and their families.



She began her career with ACS as a part-time cafeteria assistant before transitioning to her current role. She has an Associate of Arts degree in Psychology with a concentration in Christian Counseling and is working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in Behavior and Social Science.

Those who nominated Moore for Classified Employee of the Year described her compassion and professionalism, as well as her hardworking nature. On several occasions, Moore has stayed late at work to help complete tasks that needed to be completed.

BTOY Horton, who teaches 7th grade Science at ACMS, had a once-in-a-lifetime experience along with her students in April when they interviewed members of NASA/SPACEX via Zoom. A film crew from Time Studios visited ACMS to allow the school to be part of a documentary on the INSPIRATION4 mission through SPACEX.



"Charlene Horton began working for Ashe County Schools as a substitute teacher," said Director of Human Resources Roy Putman. "She took her first teaching assignment at Ashe County Middle School in the fall of 2020 and immediately began to thrive. Charlene is a creative and innovative teacher who actively seeks out engaging activities for her students. She has gone out of her way to provide unique learning opportunities for her students, such as partnering with NASA's astronauts for a Zoom question and answer session. She is a positive role model for our students and consistently brings high energy into the classroom so as to benefit our students. We are blessed to have Mrs. Horton—our "Rookie of the Year." We're excited that she will represent Ashe County Schools in the state competition for the Beginning Teacher of the Year competition."

We are so blessed to have received Mrs. Horton, by way of Blue Ridge Elementary, for the 2020-21 school year," said ACMS Principal Dustin Farmer. "Had you visited her classroom this year, you would have never believed she was a first-year teacher. Her passion and unending energy fill the room. Her love for science is evident, and is only trumped by her love for the students. Mrs. Horton has brought numerous experiences to her classroom this year, but none more exciting than the opportunity for our entire student body to Zoom with the first all-civilian space crew – Inspiration 4. It was a day that we will all remember. Mrs. Horton is certainly deserving of Ashe County's Beginning Teacher of the Year, and I would not be surprised if she is Ashe County's Teacher of the Year sometime throughout her career."

Karen Walker, who is the North Carolina New Teacher Support Coach for Appalachian State University's Reich College of Education, spoke highly of Horton.

"Adolescent Advocate, Educator extraordinaire, and Compassionate Caregiver are all descriptors of Mrs. Charlene Horton," Walker said. "Charlene puts students and their needs first. She has taken on the role of middle school science teacher this year and has set the bar. This leader holds high expectations for her students, is a role model and a creative genius. We have seen her write grants, create CIS labs, outdoor learning space and recently launch rockets with SPACEX. Enter her room and you will see students collaborating, creating, thinking and discovering. Don't be surprised when you hear one of them say, "do we have to stop," or "this is so cool." She has ignited a passion for learning and a desire to do their best in her scholars. Teaching is a demanding job that this lady loves and thrives on. It is an absolute pleasure to work with this phenomenal educator."



Jones is currently a counselor at Blue Ridge Elementary School. She worked as a teacher assistant before becoming a stay-at-home mom while pursuing a Master's degree in School Counseling. Prior to joining the staff at BRES she worked as a school counselor at both ACMS and Ashe Early College High School.

"Julie has a heart for her students and often goes above and beyond to make sure their needs are met," said coworker Lynnette

Stallings. “She is thoughtful, caring and calm under pressure. She loves her job and is the perfect school counselor, very deserving of this award.”

Ashe Early College Principal Elaine Cox described how deserving Jones is of this recognition.

“I had the pleasure to work with Julie Jones both at Ashe County Middle School and Ashe Early College,” Cox said. “No matter the age group, whether middle grades or high school, she had a full schedule every day. As the saying goes, if you think her hands were full, you should have seen her heart. Not only does Julie have a calming effect, she is also a great listener; however, more than anything, Julie feels students’ problems and takes them to heart. When a need arises, she immediately acts to find a way to need those needs, but she also wants to share in times of joy and student celebrations. This lady continually has a calming effect and shows grace and kindness in everything she does. Without a doubt, Julie Jones deserves the recognition as being named Supervisory support Staff Member of the year.”

“Ashe County Schools is honored to recognize each of these employees for their outstanding job performance. We feel fortunate to have such wonderful people caring for and educating students in Ashe county” Superintendent, Dr. Eisa Cox.

Both the Teacher of the Year, Holly McClure and the Beginning Teacher of the Year, Charlene Horton, will compete for regional honors. They represent the very best teachers in North Carolina and we are proud they teach in Ashe County.