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Contact: Lynne Russo, (818) 903-6079, lynneerusso@gmail.com

Helping Students Discover Their Pathway Earns Alison Ter Horst a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

Sioux Falls educator fast-tracks future teachers and student success at Washington High

SANTA MONICA, Calif., (Oct. 16, 2019) - Social Studies teacher Alison Ter Horst leads by example. Students and colleagues at Washington High School in Sioux Falls, SD, see it every day: She's a motivating educator with a relentless work ethic who loves teaching. But Ter Horst understands that it takes more than personal charisma to transform students' lives and put them on a pathway to teaching or whatever their calling may be. That's why she was part of the hands-on creative team behind the school district's Teacher Pathway program, a yearlong teaching-degree starter class where aspiring teachers earn college credit as they explore all facets of teaching. Known as a caring educator who bonds with students, Ter Horst collaborates with peers to improve student outcomes, promote professional development for staff and give back to the community with an annual random acts of kindness event in memory of her late daughter.

But it was Ter Horst experiencing the gift of unanticipated positivity this morning at a surprise school assembly where she was presented with a Milken Educator Award by Milken Educator Awards Senior Vice President Dr. Jane Foley and South Dakota Secretary of Education Dr. Ben Jones. Ter Horst was named a 2019-20 recipient of the national recognition, which comes with an unrestricted \$25,000 cash prize. She is the only Milken Educator Award winner from South Dakota this year, and is among up to 40 honorees for 2019-20.

The Milken Educator Awards, hailed by *Teacher* magazine as the "Oscars of Teaching" has been opening minds and shaping futures for over 30 years. Research shows teacher quality is the driving in-school factor behind student growth and achievement. The initiative not only aims to reward great teachers, but to celebrate, elevate and activate those innovators in the classroom who are guiding America's next generation of leaders. Milken Educators believe, "*The future belongs to the educated.*"

Ter Horst is bringing that brighter future ever closer for her students. Thanks to her knack for pinpointing student motivations, Ter Horst finds a way to ensure that her students are meeting and exceeding expectations. Recognizing the centrality of family buy-in for maximum educational impact, and the increased efficacy of collaborative teaching, Ter Horst keeps the lines of communication open among parents, students and colleagues.

"Great teachers like Alison Ter Horst change lives," said Foley. "And sometimes a gifted teacher like Alison can also inspire students to want to change the lives of others through teaching. We're proud to honor her as a Milken Educator."

"It's exciting to see Alison honored in this special way," said Jones. "Too often, teachers are unsung heroes, quietly going about their important work, inspiring young lives. I hope we all remember the celebratory spirit of today with its schoolwide assembly and musical numbers, and strive to always be vocal with our appreciation of educators."

"Alison Ter Horst is an exceptional educator, but an even more exceptional human, said Dr. Brian Maher, Sioux Falls Superintendent of Schools. "Through her own triumphs and tragedies, she not only has the innate ability to connect, motivate, and inspire her students to excel in their academic pursuits, but more importantly, to mobilize them to do good despite their own challenges. Alison Ter Horst is a rising star whose light shines brightly, but only so that her students, colleagues, and all who come to know her, can find their own path to success."

About Milken Educator Alison Ter Horst

Sioux Falls is fertile ground for growing South Dakota's next generation of educators—and Washington High School social studies teacher Alison Ter Horst oversees a nice crop of future teachers every year. Ter Horst was one of three teachers who created and piloted the district's Teacher Pathway program, a yearlong class in which high school students considering teaching careers explore pedagogy, study education history and create lesson plans. The dual-enrollment curriculum earns them college credit and counts as an introductory education class if they enroll in a teacher preparation program. Ter Horst takes Teacher Pathway students to visit the University of South Dakota to see its education school firsthand. Last year Ter Horst led 35 WHS students through the novel curriculum, and interest in the Teacher Pathway program has grown each year.

Ter Horst is known as a compassionate and tireless educator with high expectations for students, peers and herself. She teaches psychology, a popular elective, at both introductory and AP levels. The school's psychology program has grown exponentially and added several more teachers in the 10-plus years since Ter Horst took it on. Washington High is one of the largest and most diverse high schools in South Dakota, and many psychology students are English language learners or have Individualized Educational Programs. But Ter Horst knows how to reach every student. She collaborates with peers, continuously seeks ways to improve student learning, and delivers effective lessons that ensure all students meet their goals. Ter Horst chairs the school improvement team, promotes professional development for the school and district, and she has also served on district accreditation and curriculum review teams.

Ter Horst prioritizes building meaningful relationships with students and families. She has a knack for finding what motivates student of all backgrounds and ability levels. Last summer Ter Horst worked with 10 recent graduates to help them move on to the next phase of their education. Moving on and staying positive is something Ter Horst knows a lot about. When Ter Horst's first child died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in 2012, the teacher and her husband channeled their grief into creating "Quinnidence Day," an annual event where students,

teachers and community members come together to perform random acts of kindness in baby Quinn's memory.

Ter Horst earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 2005 from Northwestern College and a master's degree in educational leadership in 2010 from the University of Sioux Falls.

More information about Ter Horst, plus links to photos and a video from today's assembly, can be found on the Milken Educator Awards website at <https://www.milkeneducatorawards.org/educators/view/Alison-Ter-Horst>.

Milken Educators are selected in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish. In addition to the \$25,000 prize and public recognition, the honor includes membership in the National Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,700 top teachers, principals, and specialists dedicated to strengthening education.

In addition to participation in the Milken Educator Network, 2019-20 recipients will attend a Milken Educator Forum in Indianapolis from March 26-28, 2020 where they will network with their new colleagues and exchange ideas with state and federal leaders on the future of education. In addition, the Milken Educator Awards' "Why Not Us" program will pair each 2019-20 recipient with a veteran Milken Educator mentor to explore and prepare for expanded leadership roles that strengthen education practice and policy.

More than \$140 million in funding, including \$70 million in individual \$25,000 awards, has been devoted to the overall Awards initiative, which includes powerful professional development opportunities throughout recipients' careers. Many have gone on to earn advanced degrees and be placed in prominent posts and on state and national education committees.

The Awards alternate yearly between elementary and secondary educators. Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Award is completely unique: Educators cannot apply for this recognition and do not even know they are under consideration. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then are reviewed by blue ribbon panels appointed by state departments of education. Those most exceptional are recommended for the Award, with final selection made by the Milken Family Foundation.

The cash award is unrestricted. Recipients have used the money in diverse ways; for instance, on their children's or their own continuing education, financing dream field trips, establishing scholarships, and even on the adoption of children.

To get regular updates on the surprise Milken Educator Award events, follow and use the #MilkenAward hashtag on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Everyone is encouraged to watch the tour at www.facebook.com/milkeneducatorawards, www.twitter.com/milken, www.youtube.com/milkenaward and www.instagram.com/milkenfamilyfdn.

For more information, visit www.MilkenEducatorAwards.org or call MFF at (310) 570-4772.

About the Milken Educator Awards

The very first Milken Educator Awards were presented by the Milken Family Foundation in 1987. The Awards provide public recognition and individual financial rewards of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals and specialists from around the country who are furthering excellence in education. Recipients are heralded in early to mid-career for what they have achieved and for the promise of what they will accomplish.

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