



*DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR - 2023*

**DEB MONSON**

**1989-2019**

They Lit the Way



DISTINGUISHED  
EDUCATOR

I was born in California. However, I found my childhood forever home in Michigan after being adopted by my foster family. From age 9, I grew up in a small village in a rural area. Part of my childhood was living on a farm and part in a small town. Because I didn't have much formal education prior to my adoption, I had to work hard to catch up in elementary school. My mother, who was a teacher's assistant at the time, was very dedicated to helping me learn to read and write. By the time I reached High School, my parents were divorced and I again became part of a single parent household struggling to make ends meet. Despite these circumstances and with the support of family and friends, I maintained good grades and excelled in cross country and track and field. My senior year I was honored as Outstanding Senior Girl by the staff. My early life and educational experiences instilled the values of working hard, never giving up on yourself, be helpful and kind, and never take success for granted.

After high school, I received a certificate in accounting and an associate degree in administrative assistant at Lansing Community College. I went on to work as bookkeeper/office assistant for an insulation company for a year and then moved to Colorado. After a year in Colorado, I returned to Michigan to complete my bachelor's degree in Business Education. Needing additional funds for tuition, I took a semester off to work as a laborer in Atlanta, GA. This is where I met my wonderful husband, Maurie. In 1989, after I graduated from college, we were married and I moved to his home in Albert Lea to start our lives together. Since then, he has always been by my side, motivating, assisting, and supporting me. With his encouragement I later completed my MS in curriculum and instruction at Minnesota State University in Mankato.

The fall of 1989 is also when I started working for Dist. 241. My first positions were as a tutor at the Sheriff's Youth Ranch in Hayward and as a part-time business teacher at the Area Learning Center. The ALC was then in the upper level of Albert Lea Central High School and students attend classes in the evenings. In 1991, I received my first full time contract with the district and never looked back. Over my 30 years in education,

I've taught nearly every business course offered from accounting, typing/keyboarding, various computer courses, business law, management, marketing, video production, economics, career and work program courses, and even yearbook for a couple years. I've taught in grades 6-12 and adult education. I taught at Southwest Middle School, Albert Lea High School, Albert Lea Area Learning Center, and Community Education. I've been nominated as Dist. 241 Teacher of the year and I was selected as MN Vocational Educator of the year. I've had the great fortune to see students flourish in and outside the classroom. I've assisted in various extracurricular activities. I was a Business Professional of America advisor for over 20 years, a jr. high basketball coach, and participating in various booster club roles for basketball, cross country, and track and field.

In 1995, Maurie and I were graced with our daughter Chrissy. She has been the light of my life. Being a wife and mother has been the most fulfilling adventure of my life. And now I share that same joy with my granddaughter, Elleanna. Being a part of Chrissy's life as she went through the school system was an extreme pleasure. Through her experiences I realized the vast amount of talent, compassion, and dedication our district possessed. The support she and our family received from staff and the community truly blessed and continues to bless our lives.

In 2019, as I prepared to retire, I saw my final teaching assignment come full circle. My last semester of teaching ended right where it began, at the Area Learning Center, helping students achieve their goals and looking forward to the future.