



South Fork High School speech pathologist Tracy McCrea and Pinewood Elementary School first grade teacher Melissa Cowen have been nominated for the 2018-2019 national LifeChanger of the Year award.

Ms. McCrea was nominated by a parent, Katerine Perez, for being a support system for her students. She not only acts as their teacher, but as a friend and guide who will take the time to ensure they succeed. Whether it's home or school-related, Ms. McCrea is always there to listen, offer advice, encourage, give a hug, or be stern when needed.

"Thanks to her and to the wonderful ESE Department at South Fork High School, my boys are in all mainstream classes and on the right path for them to obtain a regular high school diploma. I will forever be grateful to her for taking care of my sons and ensuring their wellbeing in and out of school," Ms. Perez said.

Ms. Cowen was nominated by a parent, Joan Raines, for advocating on behalf of her students. Before Raines' daughter entered Ms. Cowen's classroom, she struggled to read and was hesitant about school. Ms. Cowen immediately identified how to help Ms. Raines' daughter and often gave up her personal time to advocate for her to get intervention. By the end of the year, Ms. Raines' daughter had hugely improved, and began to enjoy reading and going to school.

"There will never be anything I can say to Ms. Cowen to thank her for everything she did for my daughter and how much she helped her," said Ms. Raines. "To me, Ms. Cowen is the golden standard for what every parent hopes for in a teacher. School is hard enough, so to have someone like her is beyond a blessing."

About LifeChanger of the Year

Sponsored by the National Life Group Foundation, LifeChanger of the Year recognizes and rewards the very best K-12 educators and school district employees across the United States who are making a difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence and leadership.

Each school year, LifeChanger of the Year receives hundreds of nominations from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Seventeen individual LifeChanger of the Year awards will be given during the 2018-2019 school year.

- (1) Grand Prize Winner – will receive \$10,000 to be shared with their school/district.
- (4) Grand Prize Finalists – will receive \$5,000 to be shared with their school/district.
- (10) LifeChanger Award Winners – will receive \$3,000 to be shared with their school/district.
- (1) Spirit Award Winner – This award is given to the nominee whose community demonstrates the most support for their nomination. The winner will receive \$5,000 to be shared with their school/district.
- (1) Spotlight Award Winner – This award is given to a nominee in a specific discipline each year. For 2018-19, the Spotlight Award will be given to a nominee who works in a counseling role (e.g., guidance counselor, social worker). The winner will receive \$5,000 to be shared with their school or district.

Winners are announced via surprise award ceremonies held at their schools. The grand prize finalists will also be honored at a national awards ceremony in April 2019 in Hawaii, where the Grand Prize Winner will be revealed.

Winners are chosen by a selection committee comprised of former winners and education professionals. Nominees must be K-12 teachers or school district employees. To be considered for an award, nominees must:

- Make a positive impact in the lives of students
- Enhance their school or district's atmosphere, culture and pride
- Demonstrate exemplary leadership at the school and/or district level
- Possess a proven record of professional excellence
- Show commitment to building a nurturing environment that supports learning
- Adhere to the highest moral and ethical standards

To view Ms. McCrea and Ms. Cowen's LifeChanger of the Year nominee profiles, or to nominate someone from the Martin County School District, please visit <http://www.LifeChangeroftheYear.com>.