

THE 2016 “SANDY AWARD” CONFERRAL

Becky Sipos

Today’s honoree is very special for many reasons. Joseph Gauld emerged to the top of Sandy Award contenders from the largest group of nominees that Character.org has ever received.

Second, his nominators are well respected leaders in the character education field.

Third, as soon as his selection was announced, I started hearing from others about how Mr. Gauld and his Hyde School had changed their lives or saved their friends’ lives. It is unusual for me to receive such testimonials in response to a press release.

But most of all, Joe Gauld is special because he has been focusing on character development in young people for more than 60 years—before there even was a “character education” movement. Let me tell you just a little of what Joe Gauld has accomplished. Tom Lickona, one of Joe’s nominators, synthesized Joe’s many accomplishments into five outstanding contributions to character education:

- A transformative character education philosophy that recognizes the purpose of education must be to discover and develop students’ “unique potential.” He made clear that character consists of

courage, integrity, concern for others, curiosity, and leadership. The Hyde School in Bath, Maine, that he founded can be regarded as the nation’s first “Character First” school.

- Innovative and transformative educational practices that value the importance of student peer support. Students at Hyde schools recognize that they are “their brothers’ keepers” and constantly push one another to do their best. Many prominent character educators, such as Tom Lickona and Sandy McDonnell himself, were particularly impressed by the “brother’s keeper” philosophy.
- Reaching historically underserved students that the character education movement often struggled to benefit; the Hyde schools have broken this barrier. When the press release announced Joe as this year’s honoree, I immediately began receiving e-mail from people whose lives he had impacted. One said, “I LOVE Mr. Gauld!! Hyde School changed a friend's life many many years ago!”
- Serving troubled students; the Hyde approach to education consistently

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changes lives and restores hope to teens and their families where drugs, depression, and conflicted home lives had kept kids and families from reaching their potential. Nominator Joanne Gould, who is in the audience today, wrote: "I was a 13-year old African American girl with little confidence or self-esteem. After four years at Hyde, I enrolled at Wellesley College with a strong sense of self and the drive to 'live my life by standards of personal excellence.'" She is now the Executive Director of the Hyde Foundation, having served as principal at Hyde Leadership Charter School here in DC.

- Recognizing the primacy of parents; Joe's work recognizes that students are more inclined to improve their character when they see their parents engaged in similar endeavors. One nominator

wrote: Joe has "helped parents to become models of character growth for their children, empowering these parents to work on their own character development as they pursue their potential."

If all of this weren't enough, Joe is also a hall of fame coach, an accomplished math educator, a masterful practitioner, and an accomplished character education trainer. He continues to write and his work has been featured on many TV shows including CBS's "60 Minutes".

Joe's life demonstrates the integrity, passion, and enduring impact that distinguishes Sandy Award recipients. On behalf of the Board of Directors and all of us at Character.org, it is my pleasure to present the 2016 Sandy Award to Mr. Joseph Gauld.