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BALTIMORE CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER WYATT OROKE NAMED 2020-2021 MARYLAND TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Baltimore (October 8, 2020) - Tonight, Wyatt Oroke, a teacher at City Springs Elementary School in Baltimore City, was named the 2020-21 Maryland Teacher of the Year.

State Superintendent of Schools Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., made the announcement during a live special hosted in partnership by the Maryland State Department of Education and [Maryland Public Television](#), celebrating Maryland educators and their commitment to excellence in education. The special also marked 30 year of the Maryland Teacher of the Year Program, with Governor Larry Hogan commending Maryland's educators by video message.

“Our administration is proud to honor Maryland’s incredible teachers for their hard work to keep our students healthy and learning in the face of challenging circumstances,” said Governor Larry Hogan. “I would like to recognize all of tonight’s honorees for your commitment and dedication to educating the next generation of Marylanders and congratulate Mr. Oroke for his extraordinary work in the classroom and the community.”

Mr. Oroke has taught at City Springs Elementary School since 2015, and currently teaches seventh and eighth grade English, while also serving as a team leader, girls’ volleyball and boys’ basketball coach, and in a number of other roles in the school and his community. Mr. Oroke has received recognition for his teaching including awards from Johns Hopkins University, the Maryland State Senate, the Baltimore Orioles, as well as talk show host Ellen DeGeneres.

“Teachers inspire and give us hope for the future, embracing both creativity and innovation to keep learning alive during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said State Superintendent Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D. “Mr. Oroke ignites a passion for learning among his students, and we are excited to celebrate his commitment to educating and mentoring students to help them reach their fullest potential.”

Mr. Oroke is a graduate of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (2013) and Johns Hopkins University School of Education (2015).

Mr. Oroke will go on to compete for the National Teacher of the Year award, which will be announced next April. He will spend the upcoming year as a speaker and advisor in Maryland, and will join other state winners from across the United States in virtual national meetings and events hosted by the National Teacher of the Year

Program. In addition, he will be honored in a White House Ceremony next spring. Decisions have not been made regarding these celebrations taking place in person or virtually.

"Behind successful students are dedicated teachers who do more than teach curriculum - they nurture, support and embolden our students to achieve in and beyond the classroom. Our honorees tonight set the standard for teaching excellence and the best in public education," said Maryland State Board of Education President Clarence C. Crawford. "On behalf of the Board, I extend congratulations to Mr. Oroke, our newly named overall Maryland Teacher of the Year, for his incredible work as a teacher, mentor and coach."

All finalists were selected by a panel of judges from key Maryland education organizations representing principals, teachers, retired school personnel, school boards, teacher unions, parents, and higher education. Finalists were selected based on a rigorous set of national criteria that included student achievement, teaching philosophy, academic results, community involvement, and knowledge of education issues. Both written applications and oral interviews determined the selection of the Maryland Teacher of the Year.

The other outstanding finalists were: Caitlin Fregelette, *Calvert County*; Jena Ehmann, *Carroll County*; Chelsea Jones, *Cecil County*; James E. Ball, *Charles County*; Christine Hurley, *Washington County*; and Hemalatha Bhaskaran, *Wicomico County*.

Mr. Oroke will receive cash awards, technology equipment, and a new 2021 car, donated by the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association. Presenting sponsors of the Maryland Teacher of the Year Program are Comcast, the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association, McDonald's Family Restaurants of Baltimore, Northrop Grumman Corporation, and SMART Technologies. Platinum sponsors are Maryland Public Television, NTA Life\Horace Mann, and Whiting-Turner Contracting Company.

"I want to thank all of those educators that have stood by my side over the years, pushing our scholars to the greatness that we know that they belong to," said Wyatt Oroke, the new 2020-21 Maryland Teacher of the Year and City Springs Elementary School teacher in Baltimore City. "It is because of you that I am able to stand here today. Thank you for everyone that has ever poured passion, heart and love into our scholars across the State. Our scholars are worth it, and you are worth it."

The 2020-2021 *Maryland Teacher of the Year* was announced during a TV broadcast on MPT2 and was streamed simultaneously on the MarylandPublicTV YouTube channel. The show featured all 24 Teachers of the Year with a special tribute to Teachers of the Year over the past 30 years. State Superintendent Dr. Karen Salmon and Program Director Dr. Darla Strouse hosted the program, with long-time Teacher of the Year Gala host, Denise Koch of WJZ 13, delivering her congratulations by video.

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