

# Dakota High School social worker receives Michigan Lottery's Excellence in Education award

Stephanie Lange was 'swept up' with student's energy

The Macomb Daily



Stephanie Lange, a social worker at Dakota High School in Macomb Township shows off her mock check. (PHOTO — MICHIGAN LOTTERY)

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A Chippewa Valley Schools educator who had no plans to enter the teaching field is the latest recipient of the Michigan Lottery's Excellence in Education award.

Stephanie Lange, a social worker at Dakota High School in Macomb Township, was named Tuesday for the Lottery's award series.

Lange credited a surprise request with leading her toward a career in education.

"I was never planning to go into education," she said in a news release.

Lange said she was a clinical director at a small agency in Mount Clemens when she was contacted by Chippewa Valley officials to assist in creating a new student assistance program for Dakota.

"Everything followed from there as I was swept up in the energy of the youth and the challenges I could address in that setting," she said in the release. "These youth are amazing and are seeking connection and success in their own ways. They just want to be heard and accepted for who they are, and we can provide that in the public school system in a unique way."

The social worker said it's important for each student to be recognized as the unique person they are.

"These young people are not tiny adults," Lange said. "They are large children with so much more growing to do. Expectations need to be firm and realistic. A dysregulated brain cannot learn. If a student is heard and validated, they will do better in class."

“Voice and choice are very important. Students do not want to disappoint their parents or teachers. They want to achieve, and we get to help set the stage for success.”

A colleague who nominated her for the award said Lange, a student assistant specialist, said she “deeply cares for students.”

Lange started a Stand With Trans group at the high school that was met with positivity by the students. Their sessions continued during the pandemic via Zoom and drew students from all over the United States, according to the colleague’s nomination.

“Stephanie runs summer camps for transgender kids so they have a place where they can be their true selves for a week,” the anonymous colleague said in nominating Lange.

The Michigan Lottery established the Excellence in Education awards in 2014 to recognize outstanding public-school educators across the state during the school year.

Winners of the weekly award receive a plaque, a \$1,500 cash prize, and a \$500 grant to their classroom, school, or school district. One of the weekly winners will be selected as the Educator of the Year and will receive a \$10,000 cash prize.

Each winner also is featured in a news segment on the Lottery’s media partner station, WXYZ-TV (Channel 7). The news featuring Lange was to air Tuesday night.

Lange earned a bachelor’s degree from Oakland University and a master’s degree from the University of Michigan. She has been an educator for 24 years, all in her current position.