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## TCPS staff returns to school buildings

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Talbot County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kelly Griffith speaks during the TCPS opening day virtual presentation for staff.  
SCREENSHOT

EASTON — As Talbot County Public Schools prepares for a school year unlike any in recent memory, staff returned to work for their first day of the year on Monday.

Most staff was in their respective school buildings. TCPS Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kelly Griffith said it was “inspiring” to see staff return.

“They are preparing for a very different start to the school year with the same enthusiasm and resilience that they have always shown,” Griffith said. “They are quickly adapting to our new safety protocols and have immersed themselves in our virtual instruction environment and platforms. It’s going to be a great year!”

Beatty referenced the work she did in the spring after schools closed because of COVID-19.

“Ms. Aikens has made a tremendous impact on the lives of her students and families,” Beatty said. “Specifically, Tasha found creative ways to meet the varying needs of her students during continuity of learning this past spring. Anyone who has witnessed Ms. Aikens in the classroom knows that she exemplifies a selfless team player who strives to meet the needs of all of her students every single day.”

Aikens, a breast cancer survivor, spoke on the resilience theme and how it impacted her during her 2018 diagnosis.

“After receiving this horrifying news, I immediately thought about the students I worked with, and was determined that though I had been knocked down, I needed to rise back up,” Aikens said. “So I made sure to schedule my chemo treatments in the afternoon, so that I could get the strength and love from my students and supportive co-workers that I would need to endure my treatment.”

Hertrich Ford presented both Cherry and Aikens with brand new cars in recognition of their awards. Aikens received a 2020 Buick Encore GX, and Cherry received a 2020 Chevy Blazer.

Listed below are the other award recipients during the virtual presentation.

- Community Award: Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center
- Wardell Brice Multicultural Award: Dr. Christine Davis
- J. Sam Meek Unsung Hero Awards: Dr. Lisa Devaric, Emily Moody
- Brewster Merrill Technology Award: Leann Robinson
- Administrative Professional Award: Jennifer Salisbury
- Instructional Support Award: Deja Thompson
- Substitute Teacher Award: Beth Heinsohn
- Plant Operations Award: Dennis Kellum
- Transportation Award: Dominique Denby

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In a virtual presentation marking the beginning of the school year, Griffith welcomed 67 new TCPS staff members.

During her closing remarks, Griffith discussed resilience — the schools' opening day theme, which was referenced throughout the presentation.

“Resilience is a simple test. It is a test between you and a mirror,” Griffith said. “What do you see each day when you look in the mirror? That is the test. It is how we challenge ourselves to be better so we will make a difference, especially for our children.”

Griffith and others also recognized various award-winning staff members during the presentation.

Easton High math teacher David Cherry was named TCPS Teacher of the Year for 2020-21.

Shannon Beatty, TCPS Curriculum Supervisor, spoke highly of Cherry.

“(Cherry is) well-respected by his students, families and colleagues. Mr. Cherry finds ways to engage all of his students by building strong relationships and making math relevant,” Beatty said. “David challenges his students by providing rigorous opportunities for all students, understanding that each student enters with varying needs. We know that he will represent TCPS well at the state and national level.”

Cherry spoke about resilience and its importance for teachers, particularly during a pandemic.

“Our students are resilient,” Cherry said. “Many of them have faced challenges in their daily lives that most of us teachers would never imagine. Our students will bounce back from the pandemic. They will recover from their time lost in the classroom. But it is our mission to help them along the way.”

Easton High special education instructional assistant Tasha Aikens was named TCPS Support Staff of the Year.