

# Rep. Steineke: Altoona Special Education staff to be named assembly 'Hometown heroes'

Posted on Monday, Jan 13, 2020

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**MADISON** - The Wisconsin State Assembly will recognize Alan McCutcheon and Melissa Martin from Altoona, Wisconsin as "Hometown Heroes" at the upcoming Assembly session on January 15<sup>th</sup>.

McCutcheon, Altoona School District's Director of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Martin, a special education teacher in Altoona, were nominated by their State Representative, Jesse James (R-Altoona), for their work in implementing the Think Tank program. The program keeps special education students in a learning environment while being able to constructively deal with their disabilities.

"Students deserve the opportunity to learn and thrive in our schools, and thanks to Alan and Melissa's dedication, Altoona's special education students are receiving just that," said Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna) who selected the pair for the award. "The Assembly is honored to host two educators who have made a huge difference in not only their students' learning environments, but also their teachers' and classmates'."

In the 2015-2016 school year, before starting the Think Tank program, Altoona School District had more than 200 incidents in their classrooms that warranted seclusion or restraint. After implementing the program for just two years, the 2017-2018 school year saw only 22 incidents. For their work to break down barriers for under-served students, Altoona School District earned a first-place Magna Award for Equity through the American School Board Journal - the only district in Wisconsin to earn the distinction.

“I am honored to recognize these two hardworking individuals who invest so much time, energy, and effort to improve the lives of our students in Altoona,” said Rep. James.

The Wisconsin State Assembly sees giving back to the community as one of the most valuable characteristics one can have. The Assembly Hometown Heroes program seeks to identify and recognize individuals from around the state who give of themselves to make a difference in our communities and in the lives of those around them. Hometown Hero Award winners are invited and introduced as a special guest at an Assembly floor session and given the opportunity to speak.