

PRESS RELEASE

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BELWIN



BELWIN EDUCATOR RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Jim Rue (fourth from right), Longtime Belwin Teacher, Has Received the 2023 Substitute Educator of the Year Award from Teachers On Call

Afton, Minn. — We are proud to announce that Jim Rue, a longtime educator at Belwin Outdoor Science, has received the 2023 Substitute Educator of the Year Award for the K-12 substitute teacher category. This is a national award from Teachers On Call that marks Rue's many years as a substitute teacher for Belwin Outdoor Science and includes a five thousand dollar stipend.

Jim Rue has been a teacher at Belwin Outdoor Science for several decades. After first visiting Belwin as a senior in high school, Rue joined the staff in 1997. His role quickly became focused on leading the Adaptive Education Program, a program dedicated to helping students with special needs engage with nature.

Over the years, Rue thrived in this role and became a beloved figure among the staff and students. Josh Leonard, Belwin Outdoor Science Education Director, often finds himself in awe of Rue's abilities. "He really sees the needs of the students," Leonard said. Whether a student has a mobility issue or a behavioral issue, Rue's teaching has, as Leonard puts it, "an amazing flexibility . . . The work he does is magical."

In addition to his incredible track record as an educator, Rue also is an impassioned volunteer. Rue conducts research on Blanding's turtles, a threatened species in several parts of the country, by documenting their population growth and helping to protect eggs from predators. He also clears trails in the winter for students, often grooming several miles with a small snowmobile. This passion for nature helped Rue stand out from over 700 other candidates nationwide for this award.

Of course, this is not Rue's first recognition for his skills as an educator at Belwin. In 2014, Jim Rue received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the MN Association of Environmental Educators for his work as a teacher at Belwin. However, this most recent award highlights Rue's outstanding work as a substitute teacher, which he has been doing since retiring from full-time teaching eight years ago.

When asked by Teachers On Call what advice he would give to new substitute teachers, Rue said "I would say that [a new teacher] should never underestimate the positive effect they can have on a young person's life. They should never lose sight of being able to change the life of a student. That positive influence may not be seen by them until years down the road, or ever, but what you do does have an impact."

Rue was given the award at a private event on May 9th where his colleagues and friends celebrated Rue's years of work. When asked about his upcoming substitute teaching assignment that Friday, Rue only laughed and said, "I guess there's a bit of pressure now."

Jim Rue plans to continue teaching at Belwin Outdoor Science as he has for many decades. In addition, he will continue to lead guided hikes at Belwin for guests of all ages through the Saint Paul Public Schools Continuing Education Program. His next scheduled programs are a "Morning Wetland Walk" on June 3rd and an "Amphibians and Reptiles" walk on July 29th. Interested parties should go to www.belwin.org/events for more information.

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ABOUT BELWIN OUTDOOR SCIENCE

Belwin Outdoor Science is the result of a 50-year partnership between Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) and Belwin Conservancy. Belwin Outdoor Science connects children to nature through engaging outdoor science experiences at a dedicated educational site at Belwin Conservancy. As an integral part of the science curriculum in SPPS, this standards-aligned program provides over 10,000 SPPS students every year with single-day, science-focused field investigations. Annually, this includes every 3rd and 5th grade student in SPPS, about 1,000 middle and high school students, and about 1,800 special education students.

ABOUT BELWIN CONSERVANCY

[Belwin Conservancy](#) is a nonprofit organization with a mission of inspiring connection and engagement with the natural world. At Belwin, we spark passion for wild places through a variety of innovative experiential programs that include the arts, astronomy, athletic fields, bison, education, and public access to our restored lands. Through land protection and habitat restoration, we revive threatened ecosystems so wildlife can thrive for generations to come. Located in Afton, Minnesota, on the ancestral home of the Wahpekute Dakota people, Belwin's 1,500 acres of permanently protected land includes woodland, prairie, oak savanna, ponds, streams, and wetlands.