

2023 Hall of Fame Inductee

**BRENDA WALKER GORSUCH**

**Written by: Ashley Ruzich, WHHS Journalism Teacher**

In a career that spanned 34 years, Brenda Gorsuch turned her life's work into her passion that continues to live today. From 1983 to 2017, Gorsuch was the Journalism teacher, and yearbook adviser for the renowned *Westwind* yearbook, and the award-winning newspaper, *Wingspan*. In addition to the hard work and dedication needed for the award-winning publications, Gorsuch also chaired the WHHS English Department for several years, was the chief senior sponsor, served on the scholarship committee, and was the sponsor of the Quill and Scroll Honor Society. Additional areas of service included being a mentor teacher from 1992-1994, part of the Henderson County Curriculum Council from 1991-1993, the Henderson County Career Development Plan Task Force from 1993-1994, and the School Improvement Team from 1997 to 2017, serving as its chair in 1998-1999.

Throughout Gorsuch's tenure, both *Wingspan* and *Westwind* earned hundreds of awards from state, regional, and national scholastic media organizations, establishing West Henderson's journalism program as one of the premier programs in the nation. Under Gorsuch's leadership, nine student journalists earned the NC Scholastic Media Association and NC Press Foundation's NC Student Journalist of the Year award, with two advancing to the national level. Receiving nearly every adviser recognition presented by the Journalism Education Association (JEA) and the National Scholastic Press Association, including being named the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund High School Journalism National Teacher of the Year in 2004, and the JEA's H. L. Hall National Yearbook Adviser of the Year in 2013 and recipient of the Medal of Merit Professional Service Award in 2015, it is clear that Gorsuch not only enjoyed her career, it was also her passion to teach her students how to be the best. In 2018, the JEA awarded her both the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Linda S. Puntney Teacher Inspiration Award, recognizing her service.

In addition, Gorsuch continues to provide assistance and advice to the current *Westwind* adviser and staff, as well as advisers of several schools in North Carolina and throughout the country. Those who know Brenda Gorsuch know the work and service she provided for the West Henderson High School Journalism Program was top-notch.

Few can say it better than former Assistant Superintendent Dr. Jan King, *"I had great respect for Brenda and her program. Her magic as an educator became even more real for me when my daughter entered high school and found her own creative haven in Brenda's journalism classroom. Though now a CPA, she still credits Mrs. Gorsuch for teaching her tangible, transferable skills such as design, font selection, and working with a team to produce a quality product. My daughter's story is not unique. Brenda Gorsuch's journalism lab provided a nurturing school-home for countless students to practice their craft. This work resulted in award-winning publications year after year."*