

# Executive Director's Notepad . . .

## NAESP Honors Two Pennsylvania Principals



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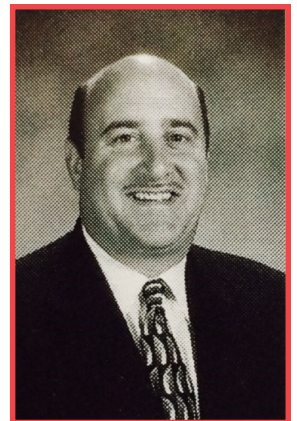
The PAESSP Board of Directors unanimously approved the submission of two Pennsylvania principals to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) for inclusion on the *Dawn Hochsprung Tree of Life Memorial*. The memorial was created to honor elementary and middle school principals who made an “extraordinary sacrifice” during their career as an educator. The *Tree of Life* will be permanently displayed at NAESP headquarters in Alexandria, Va.

The criteria for the award includes the following:

- Honoree must be/have been a principal at the PreK-8 level
- Honoree must have made an “extraordinary sacrifice” on behalf of his/her students and/or school
- Award is not to be considered recognition for lifetime achievement

Extraordinary sacrifice has been defined as death or injury while at work or protecting students/staff and/or making a heroic effort to save a student or staff member. As soon as the award was announced, two Pennsylvania principals instantly came to mind who fit the criteria and the definition of extraordinary sacrifice.

Our first honoree is **Dr. Eugene P. (Gene) Segro** from the Red Lion Area School District. In 2003, Principal Gene Segro was shot dead in front of 350 students by a 14-year-old, eighth-grade boy who was a student at the school. The shootings happened in a crowded cafeteria about 15 minutes before classes started at Red Lion Area Junior High School in York County, Pa.



Dr. Segro, 51, who was shot once in the chest, was pronounced dead at a local hospital. James Sheets, 14, died at the scene of a gun shot wound to the head.

Sheets apparently carried the weapons in his backpack. While in the cafeteria, he just stood and fired at the principal who was in close range. He then retrieved a second gun and shot himself while students ran out of the cafeteria.

Dr. Segro was well-regarded and well-liked by faculty, students and parents. His motto, “Learning is our number one priority,” continues to shape the school district to this day.

“Red Lion Area School District is a better place because of Dr. Segro. His memory lives on in this district and he continues to have a positive impact on our community,” said Superintendent Scott Deisley.

Dr. Segro, died on April 24, 2003. He was the husband of Lynne H. (Heidig) Segro to whom he was married for 25 years. Dr. Segro was employed by the Red Lion Area School District as principal of the middle school for seven years and previously as assistant principal for eight years. He also taught at St. Anne’s School in Lancaster for two years and was assistant basketball coach for Lancaster Catholic High School. He then taught at Bermudian Springs School District for 11 years and was the head basketball coach.

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Our second honoree is **Norina E. Bentzel**, also from the Red Lion Area School District. Norina E. Bentzel, B.S., M.Ed., is currently the principal of Locust Grove Elementary School in the Red Lion Area School District. In February 2001, a 55-year-old man wielding a two-foot machete entered her elementary school, North Hopewell-Winterstown Elementary, and attacked the kindergarten

students, two teachers, the school nurse and Ms. Bentzel. Although serious injuries were sustained, no one was killed.

On February 2, 2001, a man carrying a machete snuck into North Hopewell-Winterstown Elementary School, slashing the principal, hurting two teachers and causing injuries to six students before being subdued and arrested. Five of the students suffered minor cuts and were treated at the hospital. The sixth child was seen privately.

None of the injuries to the adults and children were life-threatening, although the principal, Ms. Bentzel, 41 – whom local police called a hero for her actions in preventing further calamity – was injured extensively on the hands and flown to a Baltimore hospital for surgery.

Ms. Bentzel was hurt after she and two teachers confronted William Michael Stankewicz, who got into the secured building about 11:30 a.m. by following a parent who was there to pick up her child.

When Stankewicz slashed at her stomach, Ms. Bentzel barely managed to jump away. As he turned

and ran down the hall, the principal yelled to call 911 and to put the school into lockdown. Ms. Bentzel scrambled to her office to press an alarm button that signaled teachers to lock their doors, but she was too late to stop Stankewicz from bursting into a kindergarten classroom filled with students. Stankewicz injured the children and the teachers in that classroom.

The children ran into the principal's office and the nurse's office with Stankewicz in pursuit. Ms. Bentzel found herself again face-to-face with the assailant. His blows fractured her left forearm and nearly severed her pinkie. She was then able to leap on Stankewicz's back where he finally dropped the machete and slumped over a chair.

Ms. Bentzel's quick actions and her determination to protect her students and staff is credited with saving many others from injuries on the day of the attack. As the local police have stated, her actions were "heroic."

Ms. Bentzel has agreed to be our guest at this year's PAESSP annual conference at Station Square in Pittsburgh on October 19, 2014, and will present a session on this experience and the lessons learned. You won't want to miss this informative and emotional presentation!

PAESSP is very proud of the heroic efforts of these two extraordinary individuals who risked their lives to protect students and staff. As soon as NAESP announced its memorial, we were sure that these two individuals would not only be the first from Pennsylvania, but from the country, to be included on the *Dawn Hochsprung Tree of Life*.

If you know other deserving PreK-8 level principals who fit the criteria and should be considered for this honor, please don't hesitate to contact me at [healey@paessp.org](mailto:healey@paessp.org) or any PAESSP board member.

## ***Attention PAESSP Members***

**If you have recently retired, changed your school district or have a new title, please let us know so we can update your membership record. Contact Melissa Plantz at (717) 732-4999 or e-mail her at [plantz@paessp.org](mailto:plantz@paessp.org). Don't let your membership lapse due to incorrect information!**