

#MilkenAward

# MILKEN EDUCATOR AWARDS

*The future belongs to the educated*





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**“The excitement that my students and colleagues shared with me over winning the Award was thrilling! Recognition and validation of the teaching profession is an important message of the Milken Family Foundation and the students certainly heard it.”**

**JOHN LARY**

2015 Louisiana Milken Educator

Fellow, Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes

# EDUCATION, OPPORTUNITY AND AMERICA'S FUTURE



Education Commission of the States honored Milken Family Foundation Chairman and Co-Founder Lowell Milken with the 2017 James Bryant Conant Award for outstanding individual contributions to American education.

Global competition raises the stakes for quality education. As an international businessman and philanthropist for more than three decades, I have seen how the challenges to our economy, and more broadly to our way of life, bombard us from diverse sources at an ever-faster pace. To meet such challenges, America must produce students and graduates in increasing numbers who are not only literate, numerate and conversant in the humanities and sciences, but who are creative, motivated and confident; young people who are able and willing to think independently and act with integrity.

The talented educators who teach and prepare students to meet these demands are doing nothing less than laying the foundation for our national security. For whether a school is urban, suburban or rural—whether it represents the affluent or those most in need—within the course of a school day, research confirms that nothing and no one has more impact on student learning than the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom.

The Milken Educator Awards were created to bring to the fore those educators who epitomize achievement, plus the potential to make even more profound contributions moving forward.

Since presenting our first Awards to one dozen exemplary California educators in 1987, we have seen how focusing the spotlight of recognition on such excellence inspires not only educators, but students and entire communities to new heights of commitment and expectation.

With each new class of Milken Educators, we are reminded anew that the power and promise of education must be replenished from generation to generation if we are to sustain our course as a democracy with opportunities for all. In a complex and changing world, the watchwords of the Milken Educator Awards have never been more timely as they proclaim:

*The future belongs to the educated.*

*Lowell Milken*

**Lowell Milken**  
Chairman and Co-Founder  
Milken Family Foundation



# The Milken Educator Award

## TOUCHING HEARTS AND MINDS

Since 1987, more than two million students have experienced that special day when an educator was surprised with a \$25,000 award, hailed as a celebrity, and showered with attention from students, colleagues, VIPs, media and community.

Unlike most teacher recognition programs, the Milken Educator Awards have no formal nomination or application process. Candidates are sourced through a confidential selection process and then reviewed by blue ribbon panels appointed by state departments of education. Those most exceptional are recommended for the Award, with final approval by the Milken Family Foundation.

The surprise announcements are made during all-school assemblies filled with cheering students, respected colleagues, an entourage of distinguished officials, the media—and a stunned new Milken Educator. In a moment's time, these unsung heroes gain a significant, unrestricted financial prize of \$25,000 and experience the unfamiliar but well-deserved acclaim and acknowledgment they rightly merit.

Media multiplies the message of the pivotal role that talented educators play in student achievement. Thousands of headline news stories from coast to coast herald the inspiration and contributions of these newly discovered role models in education.



**“The Milken Educator Award reminds students that teaching is like being a lawyer or being a doctor. It’s one of our society’s most respected professions and it’s something that they can consider as part of their life dreams.”**

**JOHN WHITE**

Louisiana State Superintendent of Education



“Since I received the Milken Educator Award, students at my school have been much more vocal about their appreciation of teachers. Students from past years and students I have never personally had in class come up to me to say congratulations and that I deserve it. I’ve also had several students tell me that they want to be a teacher, just like me, when they grow up. It brings tears to my eyes every single time.”

**AMANDA RAUPE**  
2016 Oklahoma Milken Educator



# HELPING TEACHERS AND STUDENTS REACH THEIR POTENTIAL



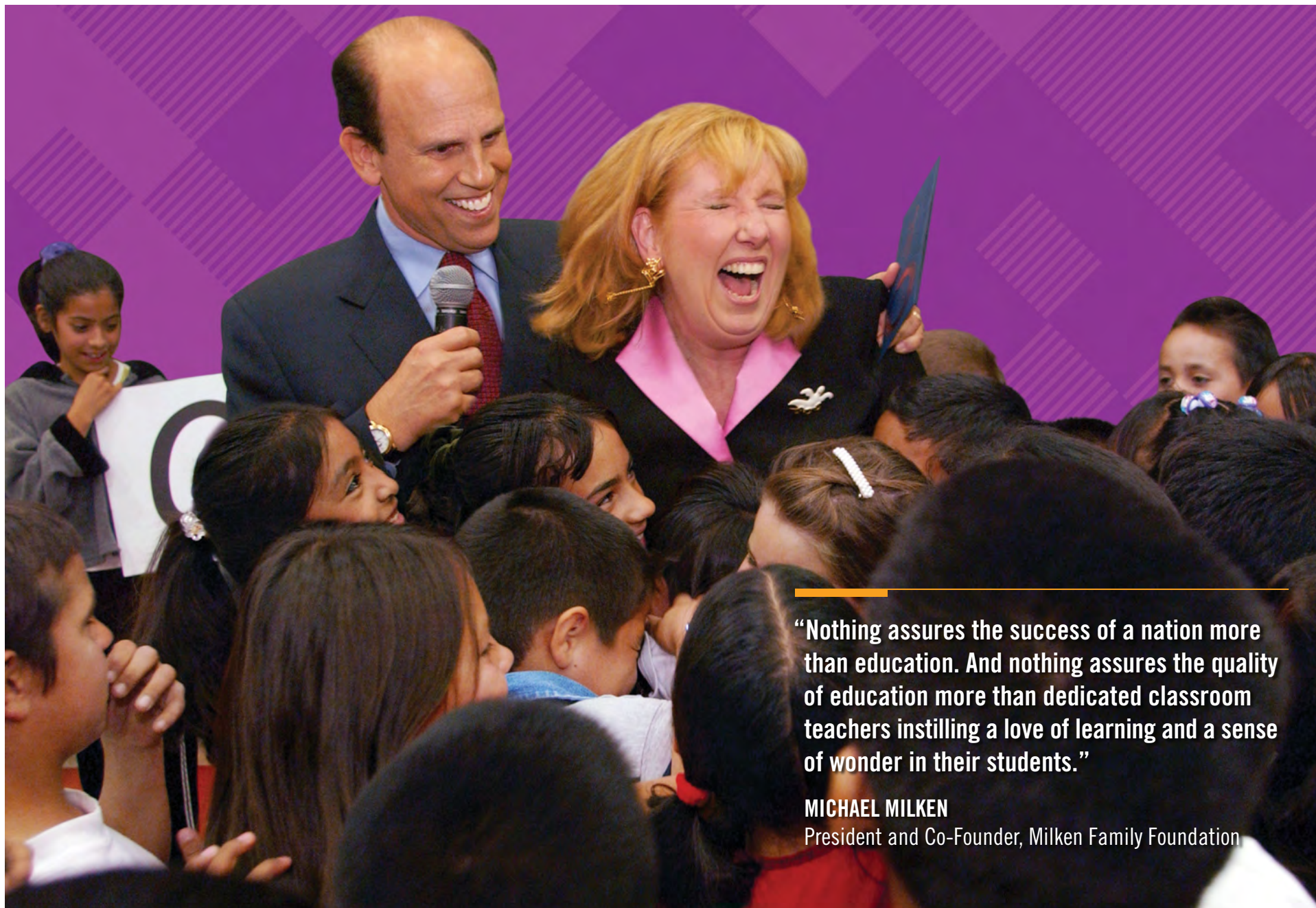
**“Milken Educators point to their Award as a pivotal professional milestone. They understand that encompassed in this recognition is the responsibility to grow as a leader in and beyond the school level. Encouraged and supported, these outstanding educators discover a renewed passion and purpose as they stretch their professional practices and policy influence to ever higher levels.**

**As a 1994 recipient from Indiana, I know firsthand the value I placed on colleagues I met first in my Indiana network and then across the country. To this day, these interactions continue to recharge my batteries and remind me of the importance of our work and why we chose to be educators—to be the catalyst and guide that helps all students reach their potential.”**

**DR. JANE FOLEY**

1994 Indiana Milken Educator

Senior Vice President, Milken Educator Awards



**“Nothing assures the success of a nation more than education. And nothing assures the quality of education more than dedicated classroom teachers instilling a love of learning and a sense of wonder in their students.”**

**MICHAEL MILKEN**  
President and Co-Founder, Milken Family Foundation





## THE CRITERIA

The criteria for the selection of outstanding elementary and secondary teachers, principals and specialists as Milken Educators include all of the following:

- ✓ Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school.
- ✓ Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession.
- ✓ Individuals whose contributions to education are largely unheralded yet worthy of the spotlight.
- ✓ Early- to mid-career and educators who offer strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership.
- ✓ Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues and the community.

**“I was quite young, having just started my seventh year of teaching, when I received this awesome, unexpected and life-changing Award. My first response was, ‘They must think I’m doing something really great, so I’d better get started.’**

**I used the Award money to earn my master’s degree, which launched my career into administration. Many doors opened because of my association with the Milken Family Foundation and I have had an amazing journey.”**

**DR. ANGIE BESENDORFER**

1996 Missouri Milken Educator  
Chancellor, Western Governors University  
Missouri (WGU)



# GOALS

Outstanding educators who continue to learn are essential to the fostering of student growth, the improvement of schools and the enhancement of the education profession. Hence, the goals of the Milken Educator Awards are to:

- ✓ Honor and reward outstanding K-12 educators for the quality of their teaching, their professional leadership, their engagement with families and the community, and their potential for even greater contributions to the healthy development of children.
- ✓ Focus public attention on the importance of excellent educators.
- ✓ Encourage able, caring and creative people to choose the challenge, service and adventure of teaching as a career.
- ✓ Create national and state networks that:
  - Foster the active professional development and career enhancement of Milken Educators and other professionals.
  - Encourage Milken Educators to help shape the educational policies that influence their classrooms and schools.
- ✓ Engage nonprofit, business and policy partners in assisting Milken Educators and in supporting policies that advance education.



**“As educators, we shape the world. In order to do so we must continuously be lifelong learners ourselves. Those who are educated will have the unique ability to continue to break down barriers, find cures, achieve great success in their profession and ultimately impact the lives of those around them. Education is truly power.”**

**DESI NESMITH**

2014 Connecticut Milken Educator  
Chief Turnaround Officer Connecticut State  
Department of Education



“While the money is indeed a benefit, the lasting thing is the significant public recognition, the validation of excellence and the opportunity to join the national network.”

**LOWELL MILKEN**

Chairman and Co-Founder, Milken Family Foundation



## NATIONAL MILKEN EDUCATOR FORUM

A professional highlight of receiving the Milken Educator Award takes place each spring as the newest class of Milken Educators comes together to meet and become inspired by fellow Award recipients, as well as “veteran” Milken Educators whose accomplishments continue to impress. An instant camaraderie develops as recipients share experiences, techniques and accomplishments while developing bonds that last a lifetime.

During sessions with national policy makers and education leaders, Milken Educators learn how to cultivate their impact beyond their classroom walls and to further advance educational excellence at state and national levels. Most importantly, the Forum helps Milken Educators articulate their passions and develop their “voice” into leadership roles.

## MILKEN EDUCATOR NETWORK

### Cultivating Effective Leadership and Education Reform

The visibility and reputation of a Milken Educator Award results in unlimited opportunities for educators to improve education from local to international levels. New recipients join the Milken Educator Network, a group of more than 2,700 distinguished professionals whose expertise serves as a valuable resource to fellow educators, legislators, school boards and others shaping the future of education.

The Milken Educator Network fosters effective leadership and education reform through its state and national engagement. Network meetings, discussion forums, national gatherings, webinars and other experiences promote collegiality and enhance communication among education stakeholders.



**“Receiving the Milken Educator Award completely changed my life. It gave me an invitation to a world that was previously unavailable to me—a world where policy makers and educational leaders actually wanted to know what I thought about things.**

**The Award also provided a family of people who celebrated the success of others and who encouraged and cheered as other educators did innovative things. The work that I do now came 20 years after the Award, but there’s a fairly direct line between what I gained from the Award and the opportunity I have to create positive learning experiences for a much larger group of students.”**

**CRAIG LINDVAHL**

1989 Illinois Milken Educator  
Illinois State Board of Education

## STATE NETWORKS

Across the country, Milken Educators...

### CELEBRATE

#### Hawaii Milken Educators

Aloha State Award recipients from years past travel from the outer islands to take part in the surprise notifications. Their collective support sheds light on the professional possibilities awaiting the newest members of the Milken Educator family. A special highlight is an annual event to honor their new recipient and present mini-grants to early career teachers.



### ELEVATE

#### Virginia Teachers of Promise

In 2001, the Virginia Milken Educator Network, inspired by the Milken Educator Awards, established three goals: to celebrate the teaching profession in Virginia, to elevate the status of the teaching profession, and to activate both future and practicing educators to pursue excellence in teaching. Three years later, they launched the Teachers of Promise Institute ([www.teachersofpromise.com](http://www.teachersofpromise.com)), an annual two-day event that features presentations by master educators from across the nation.

To date, over 2,100 future teachers from three dozen college and university schools of education have been recognized as Teachers of Promise, and more than 50 master educators—including over 30 Milken Educators—have served as mentors and presenters. The Institute is funded by the Teachers of Promise Foundation, a 501(c)(3) established by Wade Whitehead, VA '00, in 2010.



**“We are identifying and honoring the next generation of great teachers and are working to advance their understanding of what teaching and learning really are. Truly, they are our last, best hope for navigating the astounding potential hidden in our schools.”**

#### WADE WHITEHEAD

2000 Virginia Milken Educator  
Executive Director, Teachers of Promise Institute  
President, The Teachers of Promise Foundation



## ACTIVATE

### MEA Why Not Us

Milken Educators accept the Award as both an honor and a responsibility, acknowledging that it provides opportunities and expectations to grow as a leader in the profession. The 2017 MEA Forum in New Orleans gave rise to an exciting new initiative as a group of veteran Milken Educators—led by Dr. Hector Ibarra, IA '93, and Dr. Dilhani Uswatte, AL '09—created a mentoring program called MMM (MEA Mentee Mentoring Program) to formalize the connection between new and veteran Award recipients. This partnership provides a structure of collaboration to explore, prepare and undertake leadership roles from the schoolhouse to the statehouse and beyond.

Pursuing the philosophy of “MEA Why Not Us” the program establishes ongoing, focused and substantive communications, with personalized support and coaching to assist individual Milken Educators in determining how, when and where to pursue professional leadership roles to influence practice and policy. Veteran mentors disseminate information, advice and connections for mentees to gain access to fellowships, grants and strategies that enhance classroom instruction and professional capacity.



Dr. Hector Ibarra



Dr. Dilhani Uswatte



**“My mentor has an outside and experienced perspective that has allowed me to learn and expand my understanding in a setting that is friendly and open. As I transition into a new role, she has been invaluable in guiding me through reflection and next steps. My mentor has been both my cheerleader and my guide. I couldn’t ask for more!”**

**JENNIE SCHMALTZ**

2016 Colorado Milken Educator

# MILKEN EDUCATORS AS LEADERS

The Milken Educator Award is an ongoing relationship that provides recipients with additional resources and opens up a world of opportunities.



**“I vividly remember Lowell Milken at my notification telling me that he expected great things from me. I recall him saying that this Award was being given for what I was going to do to make a positive difference in education. I took that to heart! I will remember that day forever because I suddenly had an entire ‘family’ who believed that I had the ability to make a difference. That is extremely powerful.”**

## **SHANNON GARRISON**

2008 California Milken Educator  
National Assessment Governing Board

While continuing in her role as a classroom teacher, Shannon is one of three educators on the National Assessment Governing Board that sets policy for the National Assessment of Education Program (NAEP), known as “the nation’s report card.” She was reappointed for a second term.



Throughout the years, Milken Educators have assumed the challenges and responsibilities of leadership, frequently earning new accolades along the way. The recent achievements listed below, are but a sampling of the thousands of leadership roles undertaken to strengthen education in its many forms.

#### STATE CHIEF SCHOOL OFFICERS

**Dr. Michael Johnson**, AK '08  
Commissioner of Education and  
Early Development for the State of Alaska

**Dr. Steven Paine**, WV '95  
State Superintendent of Schools  
for the State of West Virginia

#### NATIONAL DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO EDUCATION AWARD FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

**Les Andersen**, ND '93

#### STATE LEGISLATORS

**Roger Fuller**, ME '93  
Maine House of Representatives,  
59th District

**Arnold Roblan**, OR '97  
Oregon State Senator, District 5

#### CHIEF TURNAROUND OFFICER, CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Desi Nesmith**, CT '14

#### STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

**Dr. Yvonne Chan**, CA '91  
Former Member, California State Board  
of Education

**Craig Lindvahl**, IL '89  
Illinois State Board of Education

**William Twyman**, KY '93  
Chairman, Kentucky State Board of Education

**Roger Wilcox**, KY '97  
Kentucky State Board of Education

**Mary Harris**, LA '06  
Former Member, Louisiana Board of  
Elementary and Secondary Education

#### 2016 SOCIAL INNOVATION AWARD FROM TEACH FOR AMERICA

**Rachel Willis**

#### SCHOOL NAMED IN EDUCATOR'S HONOR CLARK COUNTY SCHOOLS, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

**Dr. Beverly Mathis**, NV '00

#### NEW INDUCTEES, NATIONAL TEACHERS HALL OF FAME

**Kim Bearden**, GA '99

**Wade Whitehead**, VA '00



**“I need to thank the Milken Family Foundation for giving me the opportunity to build my platform as an educator and a leader. Their support, and the support of other Milken Educators, has changed me. I feel so empowered and cannot wait to see what my future will bring... but I know I’m ready!”**

#### JAYDA PUGLIESE

2016 Pennsylvania Milken Educator

# THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE EDUCATED

**“A high-quality education gets you into the Super Bowl of life. Without having an education, you’re listening to the game on the radio.”**

**ANTHONY WHITTINGTON**

2004 Maryland Milken Educator

Named as the 2000th Award recipient



# **Affiliated Initiatives in Education**

**Unsung Hero (n):** One who created positive change in history by improving the lives of others, and has yet to be recognized for his or her actions.



# Lowell Milken Center FOR *Unsung Heroes*

Discover

Create

Change

The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC) discovers, develops and communicates the stories of Unsung Heroes through a unique project-based learning approach. It was established in 2007 as a partnership between Lowell Milken and 1992 Kansas Milken Educator and history teacher Norm Conard. LMC collaborates with students and educators across diverse academic disciplines to develop creative projects highlighting individuals who changed the world through their courage and compassion, yet who are not found in history books.

LMC has reached over one million students worldwide virtually via its unique project-based learning, educator resources and student competitions. LMC's headquarters in Fort Scott, Kansas, has welcomed visitors from over 80 countries. This extraordinary level of interest led to the 2016 opening of the Hall of Unsung Heroes—an inspirational, high-tech space presenting interactive, museum exhibits and expanded opportunities for research. LMC is an initiative of the Lowell Milken Family Foundation.



“Real heroes tower and guide. They are the North Star that today’s youth can look up to. But their stories need to be discovered and heard. And when we do, we have the opportunity to motivate new generations to aspire to values that are essential during the challenging times we face individually, as a nation and as a world community.

**That is the purpose of the Center for Unsung Heroes.”**

**LOWELL MILKEN**  
Founder



## LOWELL MILKEN CENTER FELLOWS

The LMC Fellowship brings top educators from the U.S. and around the world to the historic Fort Scott headquarters for a prestigious, merit-based professional development program focused on the unique discovery process rooted in project-based learning.



**“The LMC Fellowship was my most intense professional development experience. It was on a completely different plane than anything I’ve experienced in 20 years of teaching.”**

**ANNA HULL**  
2010 Florida Milken Educator  
Lowell Milken Center Fellow



**“I’m answering some of the greatest ‘what if’ questions I’ve ever had from grade-level students. I’m watching them gain real-world leadership, cooperation and problem-solving skills along the way.”**

**BILL SMITHYMAN**  
2015 Kansas Milken Educator  
Lowell Milken Center Fellow

# STUDENT COMPETITIONS

Illustrating its motto to **Discover** – **Create** – **Change**, LMC holds two annual competitions offering students more than \$30,000 in cash prizes.

## DISCOVERY AWARD

Uncovering and sharing the impact of an Unsung Hero takes resourcefulness, determination and passion on the part of students, who learn invaluable research, communication and life skills in the process. With financial prizes totaling \$14,500, LMC's Discovery Award recognizes outstanding Unsung Hero projects by students in grades 4-12. Entries can take the form of a documentary, performance, website or exhibit and must include a process paper.



**“History is the connective tissue between generations. It provides the moral fiber. By uncovering these stories, we hope to instill these values in our own generation and our children’s generation.”**

**CALEB JOHNSON**

2013 Discovery Award Grand Prize Team Member  
Prince George, Virginia

## THE ArtEffect PROJECT

The ArtEffect Project, with cash prizes totaling \$16,500, teaches students their power to effect positive change through creative storytelling that celebrates Unsung Heroes from history. U.S. and international middle and high school students are invited to submit creative art projects in the visual arts, film, theater or creative nonfiction. Students are encouraged to showcase completed projects beyond the classroom walls in order to create positive community impact and inspire social action.



**ArtEffect 2017 grand prize winner:  
“Hope for the Verdict”  
Unsung Hero: Mitsue Endo  
by Molly Cahill, 11th grade**





The **Milken Scholars Program** was founded in 1989 by Lori and Michael Milken to honor exceptional young men and women based on scholarship, leadership, service, character and triumphs over obstacles. Scholars are graduating high school seniors from New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles who go through a rigorous nomination and interview process.

Each receives a \$10,000 scholarship, but what makes the program unique is the access to a lifetime of resources including mentorship throughout their college careers and beyond. The annual three-day Summit in Los Angeles, with presentations by outstanding leaders from diverse fields, allows Scholars to form and renew friendships as they exchange ideas and aspirations. The Program is a joint initiative of the Milken Family Foundation and the Milken Institute.



**“Milken Scholars are clearly the leaders to effect change and lead from a position of personal experience about topics such as education gaps, healthcare disparities or environmental issues.”**

**DR. JOELLE SIMPSON**

1995 Milken Scholar

Medical Director of Emergency Preparedness  
Children’s National Health System, Washington, D.C.



**“Whether they become doctors, research scientists, educators, entrepreneurs or diplomats, the common denominator of Milken Scholars is a genuine sense of service.”**

**MICHAEL MILKEN**

Founder, Milken Scholars



# LEADING ADVANCES IN EDUCATION

Founded by Michael and Lowell Milken in 1982, the Milken Family Foundation strives to discover and advance inventive, effective ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The means most conducive to achieving these goals is through education.

The belief that young people are not only our greatest *natural* resource, but our greatest *national* resource has been the guiding philosophy behind our groundbreaking education reform initiatives. Whether founding the nation's preeminent teacher recognition program, promoting excellence through academic achievement, preserving and expanding a cultural legacy or pioneering the nation's most successful comprehensive education reform system, MFF continues to champion strategies that elevate education in America and around the world.

## Our initiatives:

- ✓ Strengthen the profession by recognizing and rewarding outstanding educators, and by expanding their professional leadership and policy influence.
- ✓ Attract, develop, motivate and retain the best talent for the teaching profession.
- ✓ Stimulate creativity and productivity among people of all ages through programs that encourage learning as a lifelong process.







“I never thought when I left engineering to teach, I’d get an award! Teaching is the hardest thing I’ve ever done. Engineering was easier. But I have never had a job this fulfilling and where I had this much fun!”

**SAKHALIN FINNIE**  
2007 California Milken Educator





**“It’s such an honor. I come from a family of educators and I feel like I’m representing them. I’m representing my mom... representing all of those other teachers who do hard work every day and don’t get recognition. This is for them, not just for me.”**

**MICHELLE JOHNSON**  
2014 Washington, D.C. Milken Educator

## Professional Staff

Lowell Milken  
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Michael Milken  
*President and Co-Founder*

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*Executive Vice President and Secretary*

Lawrence Lesser  
*Senior Vice President, Creative Services*

Dr. Jane Foley  
*Senior Vice President, Milken Educator Awards*

Ralph Finerman  
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*Senior Vice President, Communications*

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*Vice President, Mike's Math Club*

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Erika Kerekes  
*Social Media and Online Content Manager*

Andressa Rogers  
*Media and Public Affairs Database Administrator*

Andrew Ross  
*Communications Coordinator*





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**“The Milken Family Foundation seeks you out to let you know that every day your choices are affecting the human capital in the world. To have that acknowledgment not only validates what we do, but it takes us away from a career and moves us into a profession. It restores the nobility of teaching.”**

**NADER TWAL**  
2003 California Milken Educator






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