



**For Immediate Release:**

**October 8, 2013**

Contact: Kelly Donnelly 860-713-6525

## **West Hartford's John Mastroianni Named Connecticut's 2014 Teacher of the Year**

(WEST HARTFORD, CT) – A music teacher at William H. Hall High School in West Hartford is Connecticut's 2014 Teacher of the Year.

John F. Mastroianni, a Southington resident and Hall High School director of bands, received the honor during a ceremony at his school on Tuesday, October 8. Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor made the announcement at an event that included Mr. Mastroianni's family, local and state officials, and the school community.

"There are thousands of teachers doing tremendous work throughout our state," said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. "While today we take time to honor John Mastroianni for his incredible work and dedication to his students, we have teachers in each and every school making a difference every day."

"It is an honor to recognize an educator as distinguished and talented as John Mastroianni. Mr. Mastroianni identifies and fosters the artistry in every young person and, in so doing, inspires life-long learning in our students," said Commissioner Pryor. "Over the past year, I have worked closely with the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council to enable and amplify teacher voices on a variety of education issues, and we look forward to working with Mr. Mastroianni as part of that ongoing process."

Mr. Mastroianni was chosen from among four finalists, 15 semifinalists, and over 100 district-level Teachers of the Year. A statewide council of former Teachers of the Year and representatives from educational organizations, businesses, and the community conducted the rigorous selection process, which includes on-site visits, candidate applications, interviews, and observations of teaching.

Richard C. Brown, vice president of the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Council, attended the on-site visits and stated, "John Mastroianni is an exceptional teacher. After watching him with his students and interviewing parents, school staff, and students, the selection committee was in awe. We knew he would be an outstanding representative for Connecticut's teachers."

Mr. Mastroianni and district Teachers of the Year will be formally honored at the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Hartford on November 19.

"John Mastroianni is an extraordinary man, musician, and teacher," said Dr. Karen L. List, superintendent of West Hartford Public Schools. "Evidence of exceptional teaching is demonstrated when students can teach each other and perform without their teacher. 'Mr. M' develops such learners. He helps students achieve beyond what they think possible."

Mr. Mastroianni is a widely accomplished and critically acclaimed saxophonist, composer, and arranger. He has performed, toured, or recorded with dozens of the musical greats of our time, as well as several symphony

orchestras and on Broadway. He also performs with his own quartet and leads his own 16-piece jazz orchestra for which he composes and arranges music. He has three recordings as a bandleader—*Cookin' On All Burners* (Stash), *The Time Being* (Jazz Alliance), and *Live at the Silvermine* (Jazzheads)—that have all earned him critical acclaim.

Mr. Mastroianni has taught at New York University, Albertus Magnus College, the University of Bridgeport, the New York State Summer School for the Arts, Bridgeport Central High School, and New Canaan High School. Besides being director of bands at Hall High School, he is also an adjunct jazz faculty member at the University of Connecticut and founded a summer jazz workshop for young artists. In March 2004, the Connecticut Music Educators Association chose Mr. Mastroianni as the Secondary School Teacher of the Year. Most recently, he was a quarterfinalist for a 2014 Music Educator Grammy Award.

Connecticut Education Association (CEA) President Sheila Cohen said, "We congratulate Mr. Mastroianni who exemplifies the highest standards of professionalism and commitment to young people. We also see this year's award to a music educator as recognition of the important role that the arts play in a well-rounded public education."

Mr. Mastroianni earned a B.S. in music education and a B.M. in jazz studies from the University of Bridgeport, and an M.A. in jazz performance/composition from New York University. He studied saxophone and composition with several premiere and award-winning jazz musicians.

Connecticut's Teacher of the Year is selected from among approximately 50,000 public school teachers in the state and represents the profession in forums and advisory committees affecting education policy and public awareness of the successes that take place daily in schools, as well as the challenges they face.

"This distinction is a true testament to John Mastroianni's skill and talent as an educator," said State Senator Beth Bye (D-West Hartford). "It is also a testament to a school district which—even in the midst of budget tightening—has remained committed to its arts programming so that our students can continue to benefit from incredible educators like John."

"As director of bands at Hall High School, John Mastroianni has truly distinguished himself. He has stepped into a role that had been filled by great teachers and leaders for decades – and quickly proceeded to take Hall's band programs to new heights," said State Representative Andrew Fleischmann (D-18), House chairman of the Education Committee. "He inspires his students, his colleagues, and people throughout our community with his love of teaching, music, and people."

"John Mastroianni has done an outstanding job carrying on and extending the proud music tradition of Hall High School," said State Representative Brian Becker (D-19). "The internationally renowned jazz band has flourished under his direction. John's students are lucky to have him."

As Connecticut's Teacher of the Year, Mr. Mastroianni will travel to Washington, D.C., in the spring to meet with President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan. Mr. Mastroianni also now becomes Connecticut's representative for National Teacher of the Year, whom the president will select in late March and honor in April 2014.

Mr. Mastroianni succeeds 2013 Connecticut Teacher of the Year Blaise Messinger, a fifth-grade teacher at Cromwell's Woodside Intermediate School, who concludes his term as Teacher of the Year on December 31.

###

**CONTACT: Kelly Donnelly**

Director of Communications and Strategic Community Partnerships

Connecticut State Department of Education

Phone: 860-713-6525

Mobile: 860-983-1550

Email: Kelly.Donnelly@ct.gov