

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona High School Teacher and Speech/Debate Coach Selected as Section 7 Recipient of NFHS National High School Heart of the Arts Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: John Gillis

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (March 6, 2015) — Kevin Berlat, an English teacher and speech and debate coach at Phoenix (Arizona) Central High School, has been selected the 2015 Section 7 recipient of the “National High School Heart of the Arts Award” by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

The National High School Heart of the Arts Award was created by the NFHS to recognize those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the positive heart of the arts that represent the core mission of education-based activities. This is the second year that the National High School Heart of the Arts Award has been offered.

Currently in his 16th year teaching at Central High School, Berlat is one of the nation’s leaders in speech and debate. He is currently finishing his 10th year as president of the Arizona Speech and Debate Coaches Association (ASDCA), which makes him the longest-serving president in nearly 30 years. In addition, he serves as chair of the Arizona Interscholastic Association State Speech and Debate Advisory Committee.

At the national level, Berlat is in his seventh year of service on the National Speech and Debate Association District Advisory Committee. As president of that organization, Berlat has overseen a restructuring of the ASDCA that streamlined officer duties, eliminated redundant positions, and modernized the Arizona speech and debate rules book.

Berlat's greatest accomplishments to the activity have come in Congressional Debate, for which he organized the first "Boot Camp" in Arizona to prepare for nationals. This model has been replicated across all events in the state, leading to overall success for Arizona schools.

Berlat has worked with the ASDCA treasurer in gaining 501(c)3 status for the state association. By doing so, that allows the organization to move ahead in fundraising and in providing scholarships to students.

In an effort to keep strong the future of speech and debate in Arizona, Berlat has continued to work with the Southwest Speech and Debate Institute. He has directed its Congressional Debate lab since 2010, and two years later, he was asked to become part of a board charged with running and improving the camp.

About the Award

The NFHS divides the nation into eight geographical sections. The states in Section 7 are Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada and Utah.

Nominations for this award were generated through NFHS member state associations and reviewed by the NFHS Heart of the Arts Award Selection Committee composed of state association staff members.

While the national winner will be recognized June 29 at the NFHS Summer Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, the section winners will be recognized within their respective states and will receive awards before the end of the current school year.

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About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 16 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,000 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.7 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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