Bonnie Augusta

Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights

You cannot learn if you cannot live your truth. Bonnie Augusta has dedicated her life and work to making sure LGBTQ youth are able to both learn and live their truth. Augusta is a proud NEA member and pioneering educator devoted to creating safe, nurturing environments for LGBTQ students in the Madison, Wisconsin school system. Her goal of making the educational landscape inclusive of these young people has garnered her admiration and acclaim throughout the state, with her models being adopted on the national level.

Bonnie created the position of a district-wide GLBTQ Resource Teacher, providing a centralized way to address the needs of students while also arming other educators with the tools they need to make their classrooms and curricula orientation-sensitive.

The support systems Bonnie has created throughout her career has given vital guidance to parents of LGBTQ children, helping them understand how to help their children, particularly in the area of transitioning transgender youth. She was a trailblazer of family support groups, making those that love these children the most not feel scolded or expected to be perfect, but to feel secure that the school system is there to work towards everyone’s well-being.

If education is the ultimate act of love, activism on behalf of the voiceless goes hand in hand. Bonnie Augusta understands this fully. As a founding member of Make Room for Youth, she advocates for the plight of homeless LGBTQ children. The unfortunate shunning of these young people too often puts them on the street. Bonnie works to improve living conditions for these young people by providing a roof over their heads and a shoulder to lean on.

Augusta was one of the first to address the ironically tragic situation of LGBTQ educators not being supported in the workplace, leading to a shortage of these perfectly equipped teachers to nurture children. Again, she stepped up and fought for these instructors to be protected from discrimination due to their orientation, or denied domestic partner health benefits, during an era when these practices were unfortunately the norm. Thanks to Bonnie’s work, many educators may never know of such an era.

Now in retirement, Bonnie continues to fight the good fight as a professional development facilitator for the National Education Association. She’s still at the leading edge of inclusiveness training, interfacing with early education instructors who help elementary school students come to terms with gender identification, addressing cyberbullying of LGBTQ youth, and creating forums for young people to do what they must do to excel... express themselves. Bonnie Augusta is a social justice warrior on the front lines of the fight for love and truth.