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Barren teacher among state hall of fame's 2020, 2021 classes

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Barren County High School's Sharon Coomer Mattingly (above) was one of four educators inducted into the Gov. Louie B. Nunn Kentucky Teacher Hall of Fame at Western Kentucky University on Friday afternoon.

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Four Kentucky teachers – including Barren County High School's Sharon Coomer Mattingly – were inducted Friday into the Gov. Louie B. Nunn Kentucky Teacher Hall of Fame.

The 2020 and 2021 classes including Mattingly, Evelyn Douglas of Shepherdsville, Lynn Riedling and Wanda Carol Clouse were inducted during a ceremony at Western Kentucky University's Gary Randsell Hall.

Mattingly is in her 27th year at Barren County High School, where she teaches Spanish.

"There simply are no words. There are no words," Mattingly said. "It's the most prestigious honor you can get as a teacher in the state of Kentucky. When your student and the people who work with you nominate you, it says that you have done a good job. And that's what we are in it for.

"It's the team that lifts you up," she continued. "It's the team that's around you. None of us teaches alone. We can't be any better than the team that lifts us up. I can't take any credit for today. It's because of all the wonderful people who have made my life what it is."

In 2019, she was also presented a lifetime achievement award from the Kentucky World Language Association for "her long-term commitment to immersing her students in the Spanish language and cultures."

Created in 2000 thanks to a gift by Nunn, who was elected governor in 1967, the Kentucky Teacher Hall of Fame strives to recognize the vital role classroom teachers play in shaping the lives of young people and the long-term success of the state's economy.

WKU was selected as the home of the state's Teacher Hall of Fame because of its longstanding commitment to teacher education, which spans more than 100 years.

Both Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman and WKU President Timothy Caboni were on hand for the ceremony and praised the four educators inducted.

"To be able to celebrate the best, of the best, of the best of a profession that creates so many other professions is really exciting," Coleman said. "To see everyone's family here makes you realize that we have great teachers, and that we also have great teachers whose families have sacrificed for them.

"The one thing they all share in common is their love for kids and their love for education," she said. "To be in the same room as these folks – you can feel how much they care. To share that moment with them and to know what they put into it and hear the successes they have experienced is just a great feeling."

Caboni said hosting the event was a "great privilege" for the university.

"WKU is proud to continue our long-standing commitment to changing the world one teacher at a time," Caboni said. "While we celebrate every graduate that carries a degree from our institution, today, we celebrate especially these four chosen for their noteworthy contributions to the lives of children."

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