

Gary Johnson
2000 Friend of Education

Gary Johnson, who passed away just this past week, has been a long-time supporter of the Beaver Dam Unified School District and a significant contributor to the welfare of Beaver Dam. Nominator Meg Foerster, who is the district's Partners in Learning coordinator says, "Gary Johnson was a proven, long-time supporter of the Beaver Dam Unified School District and its students. He deserves this award because of his commitment to students." For the past eight years, as a Partners in Learning mentor/tutor, Johnson met with students who needed academic support after school. These students benefited greatly from his sincere interest in them, his commitment to education, and his example as a positive role model.

Those after-school experiences were just a part of Johnson's many contributions to youth and education. For more than twenty years, Johnson served on the Beaver Dam District Board of Education. During that time, he held numerous offices, including four different terms as president. He was an extremely devoted and active board member, even to the point of chaperoning student field trips when needed.

Most recently, Johnson served as Beaver Dam Municipal Court Judge. He worked with truant students, helping them to understand the consequences of their actions and getting them back into school. In his first three years of processing truancy referrals, Judge Johnson helped Beaver Dam High School drop its truancy rate from over eight to three percent. District Superintendent Dr. Fitzpatrick says the Beaver Dam District was the envy of other districts because of the relationship between our schools and Judge Johnson. Fitzpatrick says, "He worked tirelessly with our students who got themselves into difficult situations ... He truly cared about our youth, and they knew it... Gary was the only municipal court judge in the state who was willing to tackle the issue of truancy."

Judge Johnson was a sincere and dedicated friend to the children of our district and to the Beaver Dam community. He will be sorely missed. However, he and his motto, "Never give up!," will continue to inspire our youth and this district's commitment to students.