

While this Extra Mile Award nomination for chorus teacher Elise Eskew Sparks and theater teacher Amy Rawlins comes from a Decatur High graduating senior, it represents the sentiments of all 80-plus DHS students involved in the production of "Beauty and the Beast."

There are teachers who change your thinking and there are teachers who change your life. Dr. ES and Ms. Rawlins are life changers.

Many of us are pursuing music and performance now as a result of their classes. Working with them on the musical was invigorating, nerve-wracking, exciting, and, ultimately, uplifting.

They supported us. They pushed us. They loved us even when we weren't lovable, when we were tired and cranky. When we wanted to quit, they made us hang tough. When we wanted to give up, they made us give more, helping us tap depths we did not know we could reach. They calmed nerves, wiped away tears and steeled resolve – and the play just didn't go on; it soared.

They essentially took on a second job of producing and managing an ambitious production with rapid-fire costume demands, complex musical scores and two different lead female casts.

I asked some other students to share their view of these two talented educators:

Senior Josephine Brodie: "For me it's because their passion is evident and overflows into every piece of art they create. Their guidance shapes us as people, challenging and molding us to apply what we learn to our everyday life. Somehow they take a roomful of students and make us a supportive family, which makes the high school experience bearable for a lot of people."

Junior Emilia Couture: "They believe in the power of every individual student to grow and learn."

Senior Katie Adams: Ms. Rawlins is the realest person you'll ever meet. She gets down to business and is organized. Dr. ES cares for her students and their success. She is efficient with her class time and is just good at what she does."

Please consider these two Decatur High teachers for the Extra Mile Award. They made me want to come to Decatur High every day. And they are making me sad to leave it.

Becca Emerson