Amarilys Heard
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Member Spotlight

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Saint Edward's School

Statement
The year for me ended as it began… with enthusiasm and joy! Of course, not the same kind of enthusiasm and joy of that first day when you meet your students for the first time and the newness of it all inspires you to give your very best. This end of the year enthusiasm has a different flavor due to Covid-19 and the gamma of circumstances it threw in our laps. Whether you taught in a public school or private school, big district or small district, we all became one body and one force of collaboration as we nurtured and encouraged one another to carry on with a positive attitude. We motivated one another to bring out our strengths and enthusiasm in this new reality. I cannot find the words to describe how this has made me feel. Virtual graduations, online home-testing, virtual award ceremonies, you name it… nothing had prepared us for this turn of events, but I found a community and camaraderie like no other, in this my 26th year of teaching. And suddenly, I am again excited, hopeful and enthusiastic about the future, because once again my love for teaching was reigned and our profession reaffirmed. Many of us were challenged to and learned new skills because in the end, we are life-long learners. We became the voice of an education system that needed to be reviewed, and in the end, we have become a stronger community of professionals and language teachers.

This year brought new experiences for me as I moved from Orlando to Vero Beach, and activated our SHH Chapter, Nuestra América, in Saint Edward’s School. I also became the new SHH Region Director of Zone II in December, and welcomed the opportunity with open arms. I am thrilled to have accomplished quite a bit in such a short amount of time with the support system behind AATSP.

I was looking forward to meeting many of you and presenting for my very first time in the Annual Conference in Puerto Rico this summer, and although it was canceled, it has left a desire to connect and communicate even more so with my peers.
During this period of distance learning, our organization immediately reached out and put together resources to help us as we all scrambled to find best practices in an unfamiliar scenario. It brought us together and then, it felt like talking to old friends when collaborating during this period. Whether participating on committees for the SHH awards or in celebrating virtual inductions, this organization has been an important piece in my career and a vital one in this challenging year, and for that I am very grateful. I take much joy in what I do, not only in teaching but also in learning, and most importantly, in serving our students so they can have a sense of structure and direction from a colorful group of teachers like we language teachers can be.

I am very happy for the students I met this year, and the job ahead of us. Of course, nothing will be the same, but now more than ever, our students, parents and families need us. As for me, incorporating the WE Service Learning component into our AP Spanish Language course will offer new projects for students to leave their own print upon. Our SHH members have already contacted me about activities for the upcoming year. They are as eager as I am to educate and serve our small community. They are eager to celebrate our Bertie Green Travel Prize winner and to get involved beyond the Spanish classrooms, and that dear colleagues, is all I need to get going and push forward. I hope we cross paths soon so that I may personally thank you for being an unmovable rock to so many! Have a fantastic summer!

Biography

A native from Puerto Rico, Amarilys Heard has been a resident of Florida since 1988. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Foreign Language Education from the University of Central Florida, and her Master of Education in Instructional Technology with an emphasis in World Languages from the University of Maryland University College.

Teaching experience includes teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages, Spanish for Native Speakers, and Spanish as a Second Language. Currently in her twenty-sixth year of teaching, Amarilys has 13 years in AP Spanish Language and Culture and 4 years in AP Spanish Literature and Culture. She has taught AP Spanish Language and Culture with WE Service as a pilot and as an inaugural course when teaching at Trinity Preparatory School in Winter Park, Florida.

As an AP Spanish Language and Culture teacher, she has served as a reader and table leader in the AP Spanish Readings in Cincinnati, Ohio for several years. She has been a presenter at the AP Annual Conference, ACTFL Conference, Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS) Conference, and at the Florida Foreign Language Association (FFLA) Conference. As a College Board consultant, she has conducted trainings in Alabama, North Carolina, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and soon online in Minnesota. Amarilys sponsors the Florida State Spanish Competition team and the Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica (SHH), or Honor Society for Spanish, at her school, Saint Edward’s School in Vero Beach, Florida where she also serves as the World Language Chair. She is the state director and the Regional Director for Zone 2 for SHH. She is an active member of AATSP, treasurer for the Florida Chapter of AATSP, and member of the Florida Foreign Language Association (FFLA).

She enjoys traveling abroad with students and enjoys spending time with her husband and two daughters. She is a strong advocate of teaching and learning languages starting in early childhood and believes that educators are life-long learners who look for opportunities to adapt, modify, or innovate their current practices for better student outcomes.