

## **Derby Public Schools: 2018 District Teacher of the Year**



Derby Middle School is proud to announce that Mr. Mike Gozzo is the 2018 Derby Public School District Teacher of the Year. As a former Marine, Mike Gozzo has been an inspirational leader at Derby Middle School. Mike, on a daily basis, exhibits professionalism to staff and students alike. He is always willing to help a colleague. He works with his peers to develop an understanding of students and the learning process. Besides teaching the students about history and running, Mike manages to instill life lessons to the students. Mike is admired by not only his colleagues, but also by his students. Superintendent Dr. Conway shared, “Mr. Gozzo epitomizes what public school teachers in Derby, CT and across America represent. His selfless, kids first approach to everything he does is a model for every human being to follow. The evidence of Mr. Gozzo’s every day approach to teaching, to life, is expressed in his students, past and present, words when describing him. One could not ask for a more honest reflection than the ones shared by the lives he has touched.” When asking students about Mike, the common thread that was spoken was, “There is never a day I don’t look forward to going to his class. He is an amazing coach who motivates me. I have become a more confident and stronger runner and person because of him.”

Mike is not just a coach or teacher; he is a mentor to many of the students. They look to him for guidance and moral support. Mike has been a central figure in constructing the cross-country program, leading the newly formed track program, and is the volunteer leader of the Derby Running Club. In the fall he guided league-winning runners for the Cross Country team, while also inspiring many other students to achieve goals that they didn’t know were possible. Another student remarked, “Mr. Gozzo is my Social Studies teacher and my running coach. He is supportive and cares about what we are learning. He helps me learn and pushes me to do my best. Mr. Gozzo makes me look forward to class and to run. Mr. Gozzo pushes me to run my best and to have no limits.”

Mike is often seen providing a nutritious breakfast for those that need it, engaging in conversation with students while having lunch with them, and supplying running shoes and supplies to students in need. He dedicates his time past the school calendar, working with students 12 months a year.

Mike reaches all students and the bonds and connections he creates last beyond the students’ educational career. It is not uncommon to see Mike Gozzo achieve success in every lesson, while also demonstrating a nurturing environment for each individual.