

Introducing Hall of Fame Inductee Rhonda Young Smith



Rhonda Smith Young
Class of 1989

South Huntington Hall of Fame

On September 24, 2016, our South Huntington School District will be honoring the outstanding achievements of distinguished alumni who will be inducted into our Hall of Fame.

The occasion will begin with a Celebration Breakfast and Induction Ceremony at Walt Whitman High School. The Homecoming Parade, Float Competition, and Football Game will feature our 2016 Hall of Fame Inductees. Additional information is on this website.

Rhonda Antoinette Smith (Young), class of 1989, represents everything that is invaluable about a good education and a community that invests in each and every student. Learning never came easy for Rhonda. She completed seventh- and eighth-grades, but her learning difficulties continued to impact her school performance. As a result, her motivation to learn declined, as did her grades. By the time Rhonda entered high school, it was apparent that she was at risk for academic failure. Rhonda attended Walt Whitman High School during ninth- and tenth-grades but signed herself out of school and had her first child by the age of 17. Rhonda's mother begged her to return to school and after meeting with the Walt Whitman Principal, decided that she would enter the South Huntington Alternative High School program.

Mr. Steven Ramsey, the Director of the Alternative program, met with Rhonda and her parents to create a plan to help her graduate within one year. Rhonda took this opportunity in the Alternative High School to heart; studying, focusing her attention on school, and ultimately making the academic honor roll. She graduated from high

school one year after her graduating class in 1989. At the Alternative High School Rhonda felt confident in her ability to learn for the first time. Mr. Ramsey and the teachers of the alternative program invested in Rhonda, and she knew it.

"I think of all my memories of Walt Whitman High School, I remember Mr. Ramsey and the staff of the Alternative High School the best," said Rhonda. "Mr. Ramsey was a teacher, counselor, and encourager. He held us all accountable. Mr. Ramsey invested in us, heart and soul."

The passing of Rhonda's boyfriend in 1992 was a turning point in her life. During that year she enrolled in Suffolk Community College. Graduating with an Associates Degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Rhonda became the first college graduate in her family. In 1996, she received a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Interdisciplinary from The State University at Stony Brook. In addition to raising her first child, she got married, had three children, and later divorced. Ms. Young raised all four children as a single parent and never once gave up on her educational pursuits. In fact, she received her Master of Science in Education with a minor in Special Education in 2001. By 2006, she obtained her Certificate of Advanced Studies in School District Administration from Long Island University.

Rhonda has worked as an educational leader for over 15 years. Her career as a Special Education teacher started at Brentwood in 2001. Throughout her career she has facilitated positive change in many young lives. Her desire to help students at risk for academic failure is noteworthy. In 2013, Ms. Young was promoted to the position of Brentwood High School Special Education Department Head. In 2015, she became the Assistant to the Director of Special Services-Secondary, for the Brentwood School District.

Ms. Young currently resides in Brentwood with her fiancée and three of her four children. She has received numerous awards and acknowledgements and continually adds to a growing list of professional affiliations. Ms. Young is truly committed to ensuring students with disabilities receive the proper services, opportunities, and skills needed to be successful in life.