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For Immediate Release

Illinois Principals Association and Horace Mann Companies Announce
2025 Illinois High School Principal of the Year

The Illinois Principals Association and Horace Mann Companies are pleased to announce that Dr. Marcus Belin, principal of Huntley High School in Huntley, has been named the 2025 Illinois High School Principal of the Year. The award recognizes high school principals who have demonstrated a positive impact on their students and learning community. Criteria for the award include:

- Demonstrates a positive impact on education and advocacy for children
- Ensures the school climate is positive and reflects high staff and student morale
- Moves actively to implement the goals and objectives of the school
- Works collaboratively with teachers and other staff to improve the educational program and student achievement
- Involves the community in the life of the school and uses community resources for students.

Dr. Belin has served as principal of Huntley High School for the past seven years and has spent 14 years as a school administrator. Belin has also been active in the Illinois Principals Association, previously serving as President, Legislative Chair, Assistant Principals Chair, and Region Director. Belin has also been active in the National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) as a Board Member and in various committee roles. Belin has also participated in national conferences with NASSP, Advocacy Conferences in Washington D.C., presented Administrator Academies, and serves as an Adjunct Professor at National Lewis University.

Belin fosters a culture of emotional and physical well-being at Huntley High School by, “prioritizing student feedback and advocacy, ensuring they feel valued, heard, and seen. I work closely with student leaders and create opportunities for all students to voice their concerns or suggestions. Through the Principal Student Leadership Council, I also focus on empowering students with the resources and support they need to thrive emotionally and academically.”

Belin added, “To promote equity for students and staff, I’ve focused on ensuring that everyone feels seen, valued, and heard through our “Recognizing American Diversity” program. This initiative celebrates student backgrounds and encourages conversations around inclusion, fostering a sense of belonging for all students. We create spaces for students to express their identities, share their stories, and engage with peers, helping to build an inclusive school culture. I have also prioritized staff professional development that emphasizes understanding the high school student experience. We equip teachers to create supportive, equitable environments within their classrooms by focusing on structure, expectations, observing behaviors, interacting positively, and correcting fluently, to recognize diverse needs and provide individualized support.”

Jessica Lombard, Superintendent of Huntley Community School District 158, shared, “Dr. Belin strives to be a transformative leader, consistently advocating for students at both the state and

national levels. His deep involvement in educational advocacy demonstrates his commitment to shaping policies that benefit students and educators alike. His student-centered leadership is evident as he strives to provide students platforms to voice concerns and ideas. Through his vision, advocacy, and dedication, Dr. Belin has created a culture that not only celebrates students, but it also uplifts the entire school community.”

“I have had the privilege of seeing (Marcus’) leadership and influence grow exponentially since his first year at Huntley,” shared Kevin Shelton, principal at Johnsborg High School. “To say that he has inspired me and others, would be an understatement. I have relied on his perspective with various diversity and equity questions, have benefitted from his presentations at both the IPA and NASSP Conference, and witnessed the relationships he has developed with our elected officials in Washington D.C. He is someone who embodies what a school leader and overall great person should be.”

The High School Principal of the Year winner was selected from a pool of region nominees provided by the 21 Regions of the Illinois Principals Association. Dr. Marcus Belin will be recognized at the IPA’s Education Leaders Annual Conference in October 2025.

Horace Mann -- the largest national multiline insurance company focusing on educators' financial needs – provides auto and homeowners insurance, retirement annuities, life insurance and other financial solutions. “*Founded by Educators for Educators*” in 1945, the company is headquartered in Springfield, Ill. Visit www.horacemann.com for more information.

The Illinois Principals Association is a leadership organization which serves over 6,600 educational leaders throughout the state of Illinois. You can find out more about the IPA at www.ilprincipals.org. Visit <http://www.ilprincipals.org/about-ipa/awards> for more information about the IPA Principal of the Year Awards Program.

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