

# UMS Announces Winner of 2020 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year Award

**Award Honors South Redford School District Teacher Rachel Bomphray from  
Thurston High School**

ANN ARBOR, MI (November 6, 2020) – The **University Musical Society (UMS)** and the **DTE Energy Foundation** are pleased to honor Thurston High School English teacher **Rachel Bomphray** as the 2020 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year.

The award recognizes and celebrates educators who value the importance of arts education and create a culture for the arts to flourish in their school communities. Ms. Bomphray was nominated through a public nomination process. The DTE Energy Foundation is sponsoring the award as part of its annual grant support for UMS Youth Education Programs.

“We are thrilled to honor Rachel Bomphray with the DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year Award and grateful to the DTE Energy Foundation for making it possible,” said UMS president Matthew VanBesien. “We could never stress enough the importance of fostering an understanding and appreciation for the arts throughout a child’s education. Rachel truly embodies this appreciation and passion, and it’s reflected in the enthusiasm of her students.”

Bomphray has worked over the past four years to grow a poetry program at Thurston High School, organizing opportunities for her students to work with the University of Michigan on collaborative creating writing sessions. Using the creative arts as a catalyst, she organizes trips to the U-M campus where her students get to work on projects with U-M students, learn to attend performances with a critical eye, and imagine their future as college students. Ms. Bomphray goes above and beyond her call of duty, not only helping her students learn writing skills but developing the whole person and widening their view of the world, themselves, and their place in it.

“Congratulations to Rachel! Teachers like her are a crucial part of our society, creating future leaders for our state and our nation,” said Lynette Dowler, vice president of Public Affairs at DTE and president of the DTE Foundation. “We want to make sure that we bolster education in any way possible. We know that a strong education has the power to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities.”

As part of the award, UMS will provide complimentary tickets and transportation for Ms. Bomphray to bring one class to a UMS School Day Performance next season, when in-person performances and school field trips are expected to return, additional complimentary tickets to a mainstage UMS performance, and a \$200 award honorarium. UMS will also work with Ms. Bomphray to bring a UMS touring artist to Thurston for a class visit or school assembly.

“Rachel Bomphray is one of the most passionate, caring, and innovative teachers I have ever worked with,” said Eli Zemper, who collaborates with Bomphray as a faculty member at U-M. “She knows that one of the most powerful ingredients in an effective, well-rounded education is creativity. She models it, her students practice it in their writing, and she goes to great lengths to expose students to the world-class talent offered through UMS. I can't think of a more deserving teacher for this award!”

## **ABOUT UMS**

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan. During the coronavirus pandemic, UMS has continued to connect audiences and artists through digital presentations and a robust Digital Artist Residency series, giving audiences a window into the creative process through six different projects by Wendell Pierce, Tarek Yamani and the Spektral Quartet, Tunde Olaniran, Cleo Parker Robinson, Brian Lobel and Gweneth Ann Rand, and Joyce DiDonato. All digital presentations are being presented free-of-charge to enable access to audiences everywhere, supporting UMS's commitment to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Matthew VanBesien became the organization's seventh president in July 2017.

## **ABOUT THE DTE FOUNDATION**

The DTE Foundation is the philanthropic arm of DTE Energy, continuing the legacy of community support and involvement of its electric and natural gas utilities, which serve 2.2 million electric customers in Southeast Michigan and 1.3 million natural gas customers in Michigan. In 2019, the DTE Energy Foundation provided \$18 million in grant support to nonprofits throughout the company's service territories. As one of Michigan's leading corporate citizens, DTE Energy is a force for growth and prosperity in communities across Michigan in a variety of ways, including philanthropy, volunteerism, and economic progress. Visit [DTEFoundation.com](http://DTEFoundation.com) to learn more.

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