Every year, PAIU considers candidates for the PAIU Friend of Education Award. The award looks for those outside of Pennsylvania intermediate units who have made tremendous contributions to public education.

Past awardees have included former AESA Executive Director Brian Talbott, former PAIU Executive Director Jim Shields, PDE Special Education Bureau Director Pat Hozella, State Senator Pat Browne and Representative Bernie O’Neil for their work on special education, former Acting Secretary of Education Carolyn Dumaresq and current PDE Secretary Pedro Rivera and Executive Deputy Secretary David Volkman, Bruce and Ellen Eisenberg for their work on the PA Institute for Instructional Coaching, and last year – Charlie LaValle of Variety the Children’s Charity.

On Wednesday, you had the opportunity of hearing the awesome work of the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation and how that organization has made an impact on education. Today, I have the honor and pleasure to tell you a little about an individual who has made a similar but more personalized impact on children, adults, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, grandparents…in fact, anyone who has heard Adam Blank speak – regardless of their background – is impacted by this young man’s ability to tell it like it is..speak from the heart…while always being genuine.

I remember your introduction when he spoke at this convention a few years ago and it was wonderful! You used the words - “ pride and joy of IU1! “ I also remember that after he spoke at an IU1 in-service, you addressed us later in the afternoon and let us go early because you said something like “ I just heard the best speech we have ever had and have nothing to add so you can go home early!

Dr. Fred Johnson at IU 5 introduced him there by explaining that he had never understood the meaning of their mission statement until hearing ADAM. He also handed out Adam’s brochure to the superintendents in that IU and told them that “ in 45 years, this is the best speaker I have ever heard. “ Adam was one of many who spoke at his funeral.

I guess everyone knows he speaks from the heart and that is why he touches people and why he still has me working with him and proud of my VP title!

Other facts: he has traveled throughout the state and into Ohio - has given over 50 speeches. Has presented to almost all of the IU’s (except 9). He also has talked to college classes about empowerment and middle school students about bullying. He is an individual who didn’t talk until he was four and then couldn’t be understood until he was closer to seven. I so remember in kindergarten how he he struggled, but with enthusiasm, telling me a story that he had met another vision teacher at a wedding. He didn’t give up until I understood and it was a long period of repeating, rewording, charades to get the story he was so excited to tell. I often think of that when he is on stage.

His mom just found the letter of his suspension in 1st grade. I’ll forward it to you!

He works at Macy’s part time

He has one more class to go for an associate degree at CCAC.

He is beyond thrilled to have a niece now - is the very proud uncle of one year old Annelise.

He has the most supportive family in the world and he knows it.

He has a goal of becoming a teacher aide in a life skills classroom which by the way, he would be excellent. He is so good with kids - my grandkids and niece and nephews love him.

He is an individual against all odds and is succeeding.

* Adam sending me an email on the first day as Executive Director. “Let’s get my people and your people together for a meeting…we have lots to talk about.”
* Yesterday, Adam calling me on my cell phone to tell me about a young lady who has her special education degree.

He was, is, and always will be “the pride and joy of Intermediate Unit 1. It is my honor to bring up to the stage, the 2019 individual Friend of the PAIU awardee..the one…the only…my our colleague and friend – Mr. Adam Blank.