

Local American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese chapter wins national award

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Elizabeth Sanchez accepts the AATSP Small Chapter Award.

Submitted photo

MARTINSBURG — The West Virginia chapter of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese was named the AATSP Small Chapter of the Year.

Martinsburg High School Spanish teacher and AATSP Chapter President Elizabeth Sanchez traveled to Panama recently to accept the award.

Earlier this year, Sanchez helped organize the Fin de Semana de Diversión e Inmersión, or FISED I Conference, at Martinsburg High School. She invited Spanish teachers all over the state to come together, learn and discover new ways to engage their students in the classroom.

As she was planning the event, she reached out to the national organization to ask it to help promote the event on social media to let people know what was going on. She got an email back, which said that the event looked great and asked her if she ever thought about applying for the chapter of the year award.

"I said I never even considered applying, but I would look into it," Sanchez said. "After looking up more information, I decided to apply, sending in information about some of our events and pictures. A few months later, I learned that we won."

Sanchez had never attended an AATSP Conference and was thankful for the opportunity. The conference took place in Panama City, Panama, June 26-29, where Sanchez attended different workshops and other professional development events. During the award ceremony, Sanchez said that though it is a small chapter, with less

than 100 members, they are all passionate and dedicated to promoting world language education. She also hopes that this award shines a spotlight on the importance of foreign language courses, especially in West Virginia.

“We believe that an award like Small Chapter of the Year not only recognizes our efforts but also highlights the importance of world language education, especially in a state where the need for qualified language teachers continues to grow,” Sanchez said. “We hope that our state’s Legislature and Department of Education will recognize the vital role that world languages play in shaping the future of our students.”

Sanchez felt blessed that the chapter was chosen and excited for the visibility so more people can learn about what it does and how the members are working together to become better teachers. She believes there is always a way she can better herself, and through AATSP, she can encourage more teachers to do the same. By sharing ideas and growing together, students will have even more opportunities.

During her trip, Sanchez also took the chance to experience the transit canal and other parts of the culture by visiting an indigenous village. She hopes to take her experiences and share them with her students.

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