

## **Windham teachers have a new leader**

**By MICHELLE FIRESTONE**

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**Special Neighbor**

WILLIMANTIC — The Windham Public School system is like a big family.

When a teacher is sick or a student's home is damaged by a fire, school district employees pitch in to help.

That generosity has inspired Windham Middle School art teacher Kim Begin to continue working in the district, where she has worked for 17 years.

“We protect each other and we help each other and that's what makes Windham such a good district,” said Begin, who recently became the new president of the Windham Federation of Teachers.

Begin, who lives in Baltic, said she became president of the union on June 20, taking over for Randall Prose.

She said this is the seventh year she has been involved with the union.

“I've always been overly protective of teachers and that's how I got talked into being involved in the union,” said Begin.

Prose was recently appointed to fill a vacancy on the Windham Town Council and because his term expires in November, he will also run during the Nov. 7 election for town council.

Prose said the Democratic town committee asked him to join the town council after he decided to step down as union president.

Prose said he enjoyed his time heading the union and expressed confidence in Begin.

“I think she'll do a great job,” he said.

Last school year, Begin was teacher of the year in the district and a semi-finalist for Connecticut teacher of the year.

In addition to being president of the union, Begin is also grievance chairman and steward at the middle school.

There are at least two stewards at every school, she said.

Begin said stewards are union members who represent teachers if there is an issue and a teacher feels like he or she may be reprimanded.

She said she has served in that capacity at the middle school for at least six years.

As grievance chairman, Begin acts as a union representative for teachers “who may be ready for legal counsel.”

She said there are “very few grievances” in the school district compared to other school districts.



*Windham Middle School art teacher Kim Begin is the new union president.*

*Contributed photo*