

## **Retiring schools superintendent thanked by community**

**Friday**

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The Education Foundation of Sarasota County honors Lori White with an endowment fund in her name.

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SARASOTA -- When retiring Sarasota County School Superintendent Lori White took the podium Friday morning at the Education Foundation of Sarasota County's Legacy Breakfast, it was to cheers and applause.

But the focus of her speech was not on what she had accomplished in her nearly 40 years with the school district. Instead, she praised the work of teachers, the ones she said inspired her in her youth and the ones who inspire her today.

"I'm proudest of the hard work of our teachers who have gotten out of their comfort zones," White said in an interview. "I've never been prouder."

White will officially retire in February, but gave the district months of notice to select her successor and prepare for the transition. During her career, she has been a special education teacher, an early childhood specialist and a director of curriculum for the district. In March, Todd Bowden, currently the executive director of Career, Technical and Adult Education for Sarasota County Schools,

White is a Sarasota native, and she attended some of the schools she now supervises. In fact, in her speech, White noted that her time at Pine View School gave her the confidence to pursue her career. Students there were encouraged to do their best, she said.

"They were driven and challenged and had a voice," White said. "And I found my voice."

White plays a prominent role in the community, and most of the audience members and speakers could name at least one 'Lori White' encounter. Valerie Yates, director of major gifts for Sarasota's branch of United Way Suncoast, said White has been a leading force with United Way efforts.

"As much as she gives to her work, she takes the time to spread her talents," Yates said.

In honor of her work, the Education Foundation has set up an endowment fund in White's name, with help from the Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation.

"Lori has selflessly served our county for the past 40 years," foundation president Jennifer Vigne said. "When I Googled great leaders, Lori White's name popped up."

As for her plans in retirement, White smiled and paused.

"I'm hoping to continue the sort of work that these marvelous community members are doing," she said.