

How to write a successful Educator of the Year (EOY) Nomination

If you have ever asked yourself these questions or something like them, this information should be helpful.

- How can I help a deserving Rider Educator obtain recognition as the EOY in GWRRA?
- If I think the Educator I previously nominated deserved the EOY more than the one who was awarded, what went wrong?
- What is the Merit award based on?
- Can a Chapter Educator be a GWRRA EOY?

Lets start with the guidance contained in the Rider Education Program Handbook, 10th edition, dated November 2010:

“F.2 Educator of the Year and Rider Education Merit Awards

Annually, GWRRA Rider Education Program recognizes and honors outstanding Educators who have distinguished themselves through performance and dedication above their peers. These awards are announced and presented during the Masters Gathering at Wing Ding.

Nominations for recognition are requested from each of the Regions during the first quarter of each year. Regions will request nominations from the District Educators for consideration. Region Educators will review the nominations (and include the District Educators for consideration as appropriate) and select those that are felt deserving of recognition. These will be submitted to the International Director no later than March 30th of each year. Nominations are expected from all Regions.

All nominations submitted are considered for the Rider Education Merit Award. While not a hard and fast rule, the National Staff attempts to recognize one outstanding Educator from each Region. At the discretion of the International Director, additional awards may be presented based upon the number and quality of nominees submitted.

From the pool of nominees, the International Director and selected National Rider Education Staff members will review and select one Educator for recognition as the National Educator of the Year based upon the written nomination and any additional letter of recommendation or support submitted with the nomination. There are many out-standing Educators, but there can only be one GWRRA Educator of the Year. Award recipients will not be revealed until Wing Ding.

The following criteria should be considered in the evaluation of potential nominees:

1. *An active Educator and current member in good standing*
2. *Have at least one full year in the Educator position*
3. *Be current and active in the Rider Education Levels Program at Level IV, Master Tour Rider/Co-Rider*
4. *Promotes, supports and participates in the many, if not all, of the Rider Education functions and events held within the District and Region*
5. *Actively and positively promotes the Rider Education Program in all its aspects*
6. *Assist with the next level officer (chapter to district, district to region, region to national) with planning and executing the Rider Education Programs and functions*
7. *Completes and submits 100% of the Activity Reports on time*
8. *Actively promotes the growth of the REP program*
9. *Sets an example for all GWRRA members by adhering to the Rider Education Program requirements*

To be considered for these prestigious awards, nominations must be submitted with a written statement attesting to their activities and support, any unique qualities or accomplishments and other reasons for consideration. The written nomination material will be the only information considered during the selection process; therefore it must be as complete and descriptive as possible.”

Here are a few answers to the initial questions:

Q: How can I help a deserving Rider Educator obtain recognition as the EOY in GWRRA?

A: The first step is to nominate them. The amount of effort you put into the nomination to get them credit for their accomplishments in support of the criteria typically makes the difference. Note that there is a requirement for a written statement, which gives the nominator the opportunity to make a case above and beyond the listing of minimum requirements met.

Q: *If I think the Educator I previously nominated deserved the EOY more than the one who was awarded, what went wrong?*

A: First off, there can be only one EOY, so those you believe more deserving were likely close competition for the selectee. The opinion of a group of people went into the selection, and that was based on the written nomination. Perhaps the nomination of another was better than the one you submitted. Better in this case means that they made it easy to determine that the minimum standards were met, and offered additional information in a written statement that provided the "judges" some information that made the critical difference for the decision of selection. In short, the nomination could make the difference. With all those deserving nominees to choose from, the nominator who is much more aware of the nominee's contributions is the best source to rely on to obtain the critical information necessary to make the choice. If a nominator waits until the last minute to quickly assemble the nomination just before the deadline, the quality of the nomination may suffer – impacting the chances of the nominee. If the nominator truly believes their candidate worthy of the recognition, they should be willing to take the time to give the nominee a level chance in the selection process.

Q: *What is the Merit award based on?*

A: Merit award winners are typically selected from the remaining nominations submitted for EOY. Not every other nominee is awarded a Merit Award. Generally we try to award a good sampling of deserving Educators across the Association, resulting in one or two per Region. If there are no nominations, or the quality of the nomination is less than adequate, there may be none for a particular Region. If there are many very deserving candidates in one Region compared to another, we have awarded more.

Q: *Can a Chapter Educator be a GWRRA EOY?*

A: Absolutely! Keep in mind that when considering the nomination, we have a minimum of 1 year as an Educator. Those who have been in the position longer have had longer to learn and grow the Rider Education Program (REP) in the area they are responsible for. That doesn't keep someone that has done great things for the REP in a short time from consideration. Recognize that experience can play a significant role in the abilities and actions being considered for recognition. All these factors can be seen in the past EOY and Merit awards given. For example, a Region Educator and a Chapter Educator are nominated, and the Chapter Educator was awarded; and the Region Educator was not successful.

So how can you give your nominee the best chance of being recognized with a GWRRA EOY or Merit award?

To begin with, make determination that the basic criteria are satisfied easy to recognize for the judges. One technique that works well is a simple list followed by pertinent data supporting the criteria. Here are some examples:

1. *An active Educator and current member in good standing*

List the positional information (Chapter/District/Region/International Educator), where they are (what Chapter/District/Region, etc.) and their Membership Expiration date (available in the Rider Ed database).

2. *Have at least one full year in the Educator position*

List the date they were appointed. (The appointing office has records of the actual date of appointment)

3. *Be current and active in the Rider Education Levels Program at Level IV, Master Tour Rider/Co-Rider*

List the Master Tour Rider or Co-Rider number for the candidate from the Rider Ed database and either attest that they are current and will continue to be current at least until the Masters Breakfast at Wing Ding, or add a list of when certifications expire. This is one less step the judges will have to take during the selection process.

4. *Promotes, supports and participates in the many, if not all, of the Rider Education functions and events held within the District and Region*

Give examples of the number and type of activities. This is an area that a candidate can stand out if everything is listed as opposed to a statement that the candidate has made a flyer and attended all or some percentage of the District/Region events held. Remember, the successful candidate need not be an instructor, facilitator, or seminar presenter as an Educator – but they can still promote, coordinate, organize, and provide the administrative support for the event. Someone who has made the effort to obtain extra certifications to teach but does not submit reports on time, does not wear all the gear all the time, doesn't get along with Team they are on, the Educators appointed above him or her, or promote the REP does not get any extra consideration for instructor qualification(s). An Educator can do more for consideration in the EOY nomination, but not at the expense of their basic service to the Membership.

5. *Actively and positively promotes the Rider Education Program in all its aspects*

Once again, nominators that give examples rather than a simple statement that the nominee meets this criteria do a much greater service to the person they are nominating.

6. *Assist with the next level officer (chapter to district, district to region, region to national) with planning and executing the Rider Education Programs and functions*

Describe how that assistance was rendered. Some examples include:

A former Region Educator was the editor who volunteered and assembled data and authored a complete revision to the REP Handbook. This was in turn reviewed and adjusted to a final version for the REP.

A Chapter Educator volunteered for X number of hours at the Rider Ed table at the District/Region convention or at Wing Ding.

A District Educator assisted the Region Educator and International Director of Rider Course Programs in planning and executing a Riding Course Instructor Certification Program class. He/She arranged the classroom facilities, scouted out a suitable range location, promoted the class so there were students for the graduating instructor candidates to teach, etc.

A Region Educator that consistently provides feedback and improvement suggestions to the International Team or peers that improves our collective ability to administer or promote the REP.

A Chapter Educator constructed a display that the District used at a Convention or other function promoting an aspect of the REP.

A Chapter/District/Region Educator assisted in improving the active participation in the REP for their area of responsibility, helping the next level officer meet or exceed their goal(s).

A Chapter Educator or Assistant District Educator has provided considerable help to the District Educator maintaining the data in the REP database accurate and timely, making the tool more useful to fellow Educators in administering/promoting the REP. As a result, a Chapter/District can better anticipate the need for upcoming courses obtain or maintain Member Levels current.

7. *Completes and submits 100% of the Activity Reports on time*

An example here would be a statement that all reports were submitted on or before the monthly/quarterly deadline. This is an area where additional information that would make the nominee stand out against his or her peers could be provided.

8. *Actively promotes the growth of the REP program*

Note the key words here. Describe how the nominee has been active; how they have promoted REP, and data that shows the REP has grown in their area of responsibility. Have they spoken about Rider Education at all gatherings of Members? Only at meetings, or at each pre-ride brief for the Chapter?

9. *Sets an example for all GWRRA members by adhering to the Rider Education Program requirements*

List the requirement(s) and give examples or how the requirement was adhered to. Reference the REP handbook for the requirements of the REP, the responsibilities of the position, etc. Even the N.3 MOU form can be used as a reference for a requirement being exemplified. A description of where the example was set and how it potentially or actually impacted GWRRA Members.

Q: What if you are not a good writer? Is there anything else you can do to get your deserving nominee a fair chance of recognition?

A: Time to think outside the box here. There is nothing that limits the number of "*written statement[s] attesting to their activities and support, any unique qualities or accomplishments and other reasons for consideration*". For that matter, nothing limits the nomination from being a collaborative effort. A nominator can act as a committee lead in the effort to build a successful nomination, enlisting the help of others to collect information, write sections of the nomination, or edit/proof read the final product. You can also solicit a number of written recommendations rather than just one.

Leadership Aspects:

1. As a nominator, you can work with your Team to establish a deadline in advance of the March 30th requirement for nominations to be submitted the International Director of Rider Education. This will allow adequate time to "*review the nominations (and include the District Educators for consideration as appropriate) and select those that are felt deserving of recognition.*"
2. Officers should promote and provide coaching to those you expect a nomination from. This document can be used as a way to help others build a nomination for a deserving Educator. Put out reminders in time to be effective and let people know this is not a minor part of their responsibility that can be ignored. It is hard to reward success and promote the REP if we don't make the effort to publically acknowledge those making the greatest impact for the Membership. If your District or Region has never submitted a nomination, it does reflect on any

potential nomination for that District or Region Educator. In this way, sometimes what is *not* included in a nomination provides insight as well.

3. Do you have a candidate that possibly deserves a nomination but you don't have all the data you need? Take ownership of the situation and contact the Operations Officer or Team members that the Educator works with and lead the charge. Involving others sometimes uncovers some remarkable information in support of the nomination, or could help avoid an embarrassing situation where a nominator is unaware of a situation that could impact their own credibility of not considered in the nomination process.

The information contained in this document is not intended to be the does-all/end-all instrument for how to prepare for or write a nomination. Instead, it is offered as a source of ideas to get the thought process initiated. The guidance offered here is not intended to limit the creativity of the nominators. Taking the time to do it right has some of the following advantages:

1. Assist the evaluators in determining if the nominee meets and exceeds minimum standards – making the person reviewing the nomination search for whether the individual meets the standards, or highlight areas exceeding standards that can be compared objectively against other nominees serves everyone's best interests.
2. Get appropriate credit for the nominee – a well written nomination puts it in writing rather than leaves the nominators' desire for crediting what should be considered up to the imagination of the evaluator. Remember, *"The written nomination material will be the only information considered during the selection process; therefore it must be as complete and descriptive as possible."* Don't take for granted that the person considering the nomination being written is aware of all the things you know about the nominee. If you want it considered, document it. If only one of the judges knows a certain aspect about the nominee and the others don't, he or she may not recognize it is missing and assumes all know the same information. An assumption not documented might make the difference in the final selection, resulting in that initial situation where *"If I think the Educator I previously nominated deserved the EOY more than the one who was awarded, what went wrong?"*
3. Potential nominees are encouraged for behaviors leading to greater success of the program, increasing the benefit to the Membership. Considering the mission is *"To Save lives through Quality World Class Education"*, the ultimate result is saving more lives. Lets not forget that nominees being considered for EOY have likely made a difference that has or will result in Members living longer or reducing injury; increased confidence in individual skills; and more comfort riding in groups knowing that the level of preparedness, emergency equipment available, and skills of participants have improved. It has been stated in the past that Rider Education is in a sense the "Ultimate" Member Retention Program – in that we keep more Members alive long enough for Officers to implement the other GWRRA Programs to convince those Members to make the choice to stay in GWRRA.
4. If the Educator interested in being considered for EOY knows what we are looking for, it helps them plan to succeed. As with any contest, those that know what the judges are looking for do better. The Membership, the fellow Educators, and the entire Officer Team benefits from a well-run REP at all levels.
5. The right people are recognized – those we want to be looked at as role models, representing the highest ideals of Rider Education. These are *"outstanding Educators"* who have truly *"distinguished themselves through performance and dedication above their peers"*.

Each of us can probably add to the list of advantages. The next step is to ask ourselves these questions:

Is there someone that deserves the recognition who's future contribution might be diminished if not acknowledged? Have I been actively looking for someone?

Will I show by example that I value and support the program enough to take the time to construct or coordinate an effective nomination, worthy of the efforts that the nominee has demonstrated?

Do I demonstrate the leadership necessary to properly promote the EOY program?

Have I shown others publically through recognition that I value those who were previously nominated, especially those who were awarded EOY or Merit awards?

Will I now take action which will proactively demonstrate commitment to success of my GWRRA Officer Team?

In the words of the now famous Larry the Cable Guy, it is time to *"Get 'er done!"*