

After judging hundreds of nominees, we at WCLU have chosen the winners for the 2014 Sweethearts of the Year Contest.

The Best Dating Couple Winner is Justin Richey and Mallory Thomas.

Here is there story:

This is the story of my daughter and finance. Justin was a best friend of Mallory's brother Logan. They met when she was just 14 years old, when he asked her to fall formal. They "went together" for a short time and broke up. The next summer Justin approached me at work and he sat in my office poured his heart and asked to date my daughter. How many young men now a days would do that? NOT MANY! I told him she was only 15 but he could come see her but she would not be allowed to car date for some time, and he did just that every chance he got. It wasn't long until I could see they had a special something going on. I let her start going out on dates with him, I watched them both blossom into young adults and I seen my shy very dependent daughter become a confident young lady. Justin made a decision that would effect their lives forever, he went into the US ARMY at age 18. He left the summer she turned 16. I have watched them manage to continue this long distance relationship going for months without seeing each other yet staying true to one another. I know they don't have a "long" history a forever love story. But for 2 very young people they amaze me with their strength and determination. It was almost a year ago, that Justin called me and asked if he could propose to my daughter at first I was very reluctant she wasn't even 17!!! But when I realized nothing I would do or say would keep them apart it became apparent they were in for the long haul. He proposed the eve before her 17th birthday in front of dozens of her friends and family at her birthday party. Imagine her shock!! She had no idea it was coming. They have decided to wait a year or 2 before marriage because of her wanting to go to college. But I have never in my life seen such love, dedication and determination to make it work at all cost for such young adults. They deserve some recognition for their devotion to one another. I am very proud of the life they are planning and believe that this is going to be "one of those marriages" that spans the years and they will eventually tell how they started out as high school sweethearts.

Justin and Mallory will win a Scentsy Gift Card, A Floral Bouquet from Jeff's Country Florist and a Romantic Dinner to The Ole French Restaurant.

