



JUNE 1, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIX TEACHERS SELECTED FOR THE 2015 EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AWARD

WASHINGTON D.C. - The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Credit announced that six general education teachers from around the country have been selected as winners of the National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award for 2015.

These kindergarten-through-12th grade teachers won the award for the innovative ways they use agricultural concepts to teach core subject areas of reading, writing, math, science, social studies and more.

"We're looking for teachers who effectively use agriculture as a teaching tool, and these teachers did exactly that," said Dr. Victoria LeBeaux, the National Agriculture in the Classroom Program Leader for USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which provides federal leadership and annual funding for NAITCO.

"Educating young people about agriculture helps ensure a bright future for rural communities. Farm Credit applauds educators who are creatively and effectively incorporating agricultural models into their core curriculum," said Leigh Picchetti, Senior Vice President of National Communications for Farm Credit.

"We're proud of these teachers, and the way they incorporate agriculture into their classroom instruction," said Lisa Gaskalla, president of NAITCO.

The six teachers selected for the National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award are:

- Florida STEM elementary teacher Christine Danger who uses agriculture to teach technology and engineering concepts by having students design vertical growing systems and irrigation systems for their school garden.
- Kentucky seventh grade science teacher Leslie Preston Meredith who features agricultural concepts to teach across the curriculum to foster in her students' minds a love of the environment and an appreciation of the importance of agriculture.
- North Carolina kindergarten-through-fifth-grade teacher Darlene Petranick who uses an 18-bed school garden to teach all subject areas at her school.
- Tennessee kindergarten teacher Rachel Parker Morris who features a new agriculture topic each week by teaching the alphabet with agriculture-related words or class stories, and participating in a year-long study that ends with a field trip to a local farm.
- Virginia kindergarten teacher M.K. Preston who tries to instill in students a love of and respect for agriculture and the environment through inquiry-based and hands-on activities, and involvement in the Belview Giving Gardens school garden laboratory.
- Utah fifth grade teacher Théo Anderson who created the "Hens for Hunger" service learning project to help her students make connections to agriculture by contextualizing core curriculum in science and social studies. Her students hatch chicks, raise hens, collect eggs and make donations to the local food pantry.

They will be honored by at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference "Unbridled Possibilities," to be held June 16-20 at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, KY. NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing the 50 state Agriculture in the Classroom programs around the country. Its mission is to educate K-12 teachers and students about the importance of agriculture by providing them with web-based materials, workshops and awards programs that demonstrate how agriculture can be used to effectively teach core subject areas.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT LISA GASKALLA at (352) 745-0246 or gaskalla@ufl.edu