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EIGHT TEACHERS SELECTED FOR THE 2020 NATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AWARD

A fifth grade literacy and science teacher in Maine whose students run a seed 'company' to raise funds for their school garden, a seventh and eighth grade science teacher in New Mexico whose students apply for 'jobs' to oversee their schoolyard chicken coop and greenhouse based on their science background and six other teachers from around the country have been selected as the 2020 National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award winners.

The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Credit partner each year to honor teachers in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade from around the country for the innovative ways they use agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies, STEM, STEAM and more.

"These teachers are great examples of how effective agricultural concepts can be in delivering important reading, writing, math, nutrition, science and social studies lessons to students," said Dr. Scott Angle, director of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which provides federal leadership and annual funding for NAITC. "The real-life connections teachers make by using items students use every day resonates with students."

"We are proud to honor these teachers for the innovative ways they use agriculture every day in their classrooms to teach students about this important industry," said Will Fett, president of NAITCO and executive director of Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation.

"Farm Credit's commitment to rural communities and agriculture extends to our support of initiatives that build the next generation of agriculture advocates," said president and CEO of the Farm Credit Council Todd Van Hoose. "These outstanding teachers represent the best and brightest ideas in agriculture literacy education. Farm Credit is proud to support their innovative work."

This year's winning teachers are:

- Patricia Wolfe, a special education teacher at Lakemary Center School in Paola, KS who develops her own curriculum with resources from National Agriculture in the Classroom and the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom and uses an outdoor animal and garden therapy center, known as the "Ranch," to reach her students who have different levels of learning abilities.
- Lynn Snow, a fifth grade literacy and science teacher at Thomaston Grammar School in Thomaston, ME, who 'opens' Common Ground Garden Seed Co. each spring. Students are involved in every aspect of the company beginning with applications and interviews to determine the jobs they will perform in packaging, marketing and managing the sale of bulk seeds to raise funds for the school garden.
- Jeremiah Best, a fifth grade general studies teacher at Town of Webb UFSD in Old Forge, NY in the Adirondack Mountains who embraces a school and community garden as a way to help his students deal with a recent increase in student suicides and strengthen their critical thinking skills by developing biomass fertilizer using compost, prevention devices to keep wildlife out of the garden and a Bluetooth automated drip irrigation system.
- Christie Puckett, a third through sixth grade science teacher at Maysville Public School in Maysville, OK who uses a school garden and a study of the origins of the fruits and vegetables grown in it to help students 'travel' to different stations in the garden to learn about that particular region of the world in which the crop is grown and the land forms, water bodies and climate specific to it.
- Ryan Ferre, a fifth grade math, science, language arts, social studies, art and health teacher at Saratoga Shores Elementary in Saratoga Springs, UT who uses a pumpkin growing contest, development of different cultivars of flowers, embryology and hydroponics to teach his students important STEM concepts (science, technology, engineering and math).

- Pamela Hall, a kindergarten through third grade STEM teacher at Carrollton Elementary in Carrollton, VA who uses agricultural concepts in her classroom instruction throughout the school year, which covers plant and animal life cycle studies, farm day nature walk observations, farmer guest speakers who talk about agricultural careers and pollinator rearing activities, among other initiatives.
- Suzanne Squires, a sixth through eighth grade core science electives teacher at Los Olivos Elementary in Los Olivos, CA whose students learn about agriculture by exploring the school's oak trees and invasive species affecting them, participating in STEM activities that investigate 'Popcorn Genetics' and learning important health lessons by maintaining the school garden and incorporating California specialty crops into the garden design.
- Cindy Lee, a seventh and eighth grade science and science elective teacher at Snell Middle School in Bayard, NM whose students go through a job 'interview' process in which their placement overseeing the school chicken coop and greenhouse is based on their backgrounds in science.

They will be honored at the 2020 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference "Agriculture Elevated" June 24-26 at the Little America Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah.

USDA/NIFA provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences. It invests in and supports initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture. NIFA applies an integrated approach to ensure that groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice. To learn more about USDA/NIFA, please visit <https://nifa.usda.gov/>.

Farm Credit supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow. To learn more about Farm Credit, please visit <https://farmcredit.com/>.

NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing Agriculture in the Classroom programs in most of the 50 states across the country, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Its mission is to educate Pre-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. To learn more about NAITCO, please visit www.agclassroom.org.

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