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**EIGHT TEACHERS, TEAM OF TEACHERS SELECTED FOR THE
2019 NATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AWARD**

A special needs teacher in Alabama who established a small chicken farm on campus to teach students about agriculture, a team of Florida teachers who used a school garden club to teach students how to grow food and develop alternative energy sources and six other teachers from around the country have been selected as the 2019 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 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.

"We are proud to honor these teachers who use agricultural concepts to deliver important reading, writing, math, nutrition, science and social studies lessons to students," 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 NAITC. "The real-life connections teachers make by using items students use every day resonates with these students."

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

"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:

- Rachel Chastain, a special needs teacher at the Helen Keller Campus of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind in Talladega, AL, whose students learn about agriculture and animal husbandry by rearing chickens and other small farm animals on school grounds.
- Andy Klatt, a physical education teacher at Grandview Elementary in Windsor, CO, who uses a school garden and an after-school garden club to teach students throughout the school about the importance of healthy eating and exercise.
- A team of five teachers - Dawn Chehab, Joshua Garrett, John Martinez, Erica Roberts and Nicholas Zebroski – at Millennia Gardens Elementary School in Orlando, FL who established 'Eco-Club' to teach students in third through fifth grade about growing food in raised bed gardens and hydroponics towers, protecting the environment and being good stewards of the land with a wildlife sanctuary and developing alternative energy sources with a 'Pedal-A-Watt' bicycling station that powers the school garden irrigation system.
- Beth Sletta, a STEM teacher at Jefferson Elementary in New Ulm, MN whose students design a winter seed sowing system to grow vegetables when it's too cold to grow them outside and use a 3-D printer to design longer lasting plant stakes, among other initiatives.
- Johnnie Keel, a math and gifted teacher at Truman Elementary in Oklahoma City, OK, whose third, fourth and fifth graders research farm equipment designs online and build miniature versions of this machinery using Legos and participate in a STEM Day to learn about chemistry and genetics in agriculture, among other projects.
- Dawn Alexander, a fifth-grade teacher at Tom McCall Elementary in Redmond, OR, who uses bees and a project called 'Please the Bees' to educate students about agriculture and the environment.

- Brad Hendershot, a science teacher at Excelsior Academy in Erda, UT, whose sixth, seventh and eighth graders participate in a special class called 'Greenthumbs' where they work in two schoolyard greenhouses to grow, harvest, market and sell their fruits, vegetables and ornamental plants.
- Chris Kniesly, a life science teacher at Twain Middle School in Alexandria, VA, whose students grow lettuce hydroponically, raise crayfish, cultivate mushrooms and produce 'hot' compost to learn important plant biology and aquaculture lessons.

They will be honored at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference "AgVenture in the Natural State" June 19-21 at the Little Rock Marriott in Little Rock, Arkansas. NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing Agriculture in the Classroom programs in most of the 50 states across 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.

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