



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NAITCO SPREADS AGRICULTURAL LITERACY MESSAGE
TO MORE THAN 500 EDUCATORS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

HERSHEY, PA – More than 500 educators from around the country participated in the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization’s (NAITCO) annual conference “The Sweet Story of Agriculture” held at the Hershey Lodge June 24-27 in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

NAITCO, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation, held three days of workshops that showed kindergarten through 12th grade teachers how to use agriculture to teach core subjects of language arts, science, social studies and health. In addition, conference participants went on traveling workshops of nearby farms and university research facilities to learn about equine, mushroom and fruit production, among other stops.

The conference also honored several national teacher winners and a national Ag Advocate winner for the innovative ways they use agriculture to teach students about an important industry.

“National Agriculture in the Classroom and Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation worked hard to present the ‘best of the best’ educator award winners and agriculture-related lesson plans to K-12 teachers who attended the conference,” said George Mayo, president of the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization. “Bottom line: We showed teachers that agriculture is a great way to teach core subjects and familiarize students with where their food, fiber and fuel come from.”

For instance, one workshop called “Peas in a Pod: The Story of Heredity” taught genetics using yellow and green pea images and another workshop called “Making Common Core Common Place with Agricultural Concepts” taught Common Core applications using agriculture.

Of the 527 conference participants, more than half were teachers from around the country, many of whom received scholarships provided by CHS and several Pennsylvania sponsors to help them cover the cost to attend.

Said one teacher in an evaluation of the conference: “I hope to not only do a comparison of resources from the various states (from the exhibit freebies), but to also use lessons from my sessions such as bees and pollination, candy (natural resources), and even from information gathered on my “field trips!”

Recipients of the 2014 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Credit, are:

- Virginia pre-school teacher Lauren Arbogast who holds 'Farm Fridays' with her students and 'Farming in the City Day' with her community where exhibitors and activities to teach city students and adults about the source of their food and fiber.
- Louisiana fourth grade teacher JoAnn Hebert who integrates agriculture concepts into all subjects throughout the school year using a school garden, an incubator that demonstrates the life cycle of chickens and a wetland ecosystem project.
- Tennessee fourth grade teacher Missy Locke who developed a year-long curriculum that uses her school garden to teach science and social studies.
- South Carolina third grade teacher Melinda Beach who teaches all subjects using agriculture and the environment.
- Georgia fourth grade teacher Dennis Peavy who uses an agriculture fact each day and incorporates agriculture lessons plans throughout his teaching strategy to educate students about the source of the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the shelter they enjoy. Other teachers in his school and school district are learning to use his approach.

In addition, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture honored at the conference 10 teachers and one agriculture industry educator from around the country for using agriculture as an effective teaching tool as part of its White-Reinhardt Fund for Education program.

The recipient of the 2014 Ag Advocate Award, which is sponsored by the National Grange, is Maryland dairy farmer Evelyn Wilcom.

Wilcom established the Great Frederick Fair exhibit called "City Streets, Country Roads" which each year educates more than 6,000 students about agriculture. In addition, she leads a statewide agriculture literacy program with the Maryland Farm Bureau, and developed a book barn program that reaches all the elementary schools in her community. She has served on the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation's Elementary Education Committee for more than 10 years, and supports its annual teacher training, among other efforts.

A big 'thank you' goes to national conference sponsors American Egg Board, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, the National Peanut Board and Georgia Peanut Commission, and several Pennsylvania agricultural groups that supported the event. Their contributions helped keep registration costs low so more teachers could attend.

Next year's conference, to be called "Unbridled Possibilities," will be held June 16-20 at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, KY.

NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing most of the 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 materials and awards programs that demonstrate how agriculture can be used to effectively teach core subject areas.

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