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EIGHT TEACHERS SELECTED FOR THE 2017 EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AWARD

The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Farm Credit announced that eight general education teachers from around the country have been selected as winners of the National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award for 2017.

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, STEM and more.

"We're proud of these award-winning teachers who demonstrate so well how effective agriculture can be when used as a teaching tool," 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.

"These teachers exemplify how easily connections to agriculture can be made in classroom instruction," said Chris Fleming, president of NAITCO. "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 ag literacy education. Farm Credit is proud to support their innovative work."

These eight teachers, who altogether reach about 1,500 students with their agricultural classroom approaches, are:

- Georgia elementary STEM resource teacher Marla Garnto whose 440 students work with local poultry processor Perdue Farms on a 'STEM Challenge' in which students devise ways to improve efficiencies at the poultry plant.
- Maine team teachers Stephanie Enaire and Morgan Kerr who use a school garden, a watershed project and a classroom embryology project to teach across the curriculum to foster in the minds of their 100 fifth, sixth and seventh graders a love of the environment and an appreciation of the importance of agriculture.
- Oklahoma third grade teacher Amber Bales who ties Oklahoma agriculture to her language arts, math, science and social studies instruction by putting a local twist on the story *Stone Soup*, involving her 22 students in their school's Farm to School program and planting cabbage and pea plants.
- Tennessee science teacher Debra Steen who uses growing plants and rearing animals to teach her 96 fourth and fifth graders all the life sciences, including germination, tropism, photosynthesis, animal genetics and more.
- Utah elementary teacher Tiffany Porter who implemented a school-wide program involving a greenhouse, aquaponics system and weather station in which 500 students design irrigation systems, determine the best plants to grow in these systems and the nutrients created from the aquaponics system, among other efforts.
- Virginia first grade teacher Jessica Pittman who uses counting diverse types of seeds to teach her 26 students math, a Virginia Ag shapes lesson to teach geometry, and an aeroponic growing system to teach science, among other subject areas.
- Iowa high school science teacher DeEtta Andersen whose 150 students in her biology and physical science classes develop biological buffers to clean a nearby water body, design wind turbines as part of an alternative energy unit and engineer starch-based plastics as alternatives to oil-based plastics.
- Kansas high school biology, ecology and forensic crime science teacher Denise Scribner who uses a school wildlife learning site to educate 165 students about 300 varieties of native and cultivated plants, and soil types and profiles. In addition, students in her forensic crime science class learn about the biogeochemical cycle by investigating a mystery involving contaminated soil at a farm.

They will be honored by at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference "Show Me Agriculture," June 20-23 at the Sheraton Kansas City Crown Center in Kansas City, MO. NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing most of 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.

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