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EIGHT TEACHERS SELECTED FOR THE 2018 EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING ABOUT AGRICULTURE AWARD

A New York elementary teacher who connects her students with an Iowa corn and soybean grower using social media, a Wisconsin elementary teacher whose students made cheese their state's official dairy product and six other teachers from around the country have been selected as the 2018 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.

"These teachers are examples of how using agricultural concepts in the classroom can successfully deliver important reading, writing, math, 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 NAITCO. "The real-life connections teachers make by using items students use every day resonates with them."

"The students these teachers reach learn about the importance of agriculture, and the careers that are available in this important industry," said Willie Grenier, president of NAITCO and executive director of Maine Agriculture in the Classroom. "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 eight winning teachers are:

- Jacqueline Holmes, a third-grade teacher at Triangle Elementary in Florida, who turned a love of horticulture into a schoolwide garden initiative to teach students reading, writing, math, science and social studies, good nutrition and the value of giving back to the community.
- Wanda Small, a K-6th grade teacher at Atchison County Community Elementary in Kansas, who partners with Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, 4-H and Kansas Farm Bureau to educate students about the animal and plant sciences and cover the STEAM subject areas (Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Math).
- Julie Janecka, a fifth-grade teacher at East Picacho Elementary in New Mexico, who uses a schoolwide unit on the chile, her state's signature crop, to teach science, economics, cultural studies and nutrition.
- Amy Gosier, a first-grade teacher at Milton Terrace Elementary in New York, who developed a cross curricular unit on corn and whose students Skyped regularly with an Iowa corn and soybean grower as he planted, cultivated and harvested his crop.
- Andy Roach, a fifth-grade math teacher at McFadden School of Excellence in Tennessee, who uses a school garden and hen house to teach students how to measure the distance between seeds as they are being planted, and chicken height, weight and percentage change between the two as the chickens grow, among many other math lessons.
- Jennifer Massengill, PreK-4th grade science and technology teacher at Hampton Roads Academy in Virginia, who uses a school garden as the subject for a schoolwide blog group, afternoon garden club and morning cooking class to teach technology and plant germination, nutrition and genetics to teach science.
- Livia Doyle, a fourth-grade teacher at Mineral Point Unified School District in Wisconsin, whose students launched a successful effort to convince state lawmakers to make cheese Wisconsin's official state dairy product.

- Amy Mastin, a middle school teacher at Laporte School in Minnesota, who initiated a schoolwide, cross-curricular garden effort starting with each class planting hay bale gardens and expanding to raised bed gardens available to all classrooms and built by the high school construction class.

They will be honored at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference “Agriculture for ME on Land and Sea” June 27-29 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine. 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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