



First grade teacher named ag foundation's teacher of the year; five teachers win awards

MANHATTAN, Kan. - Aug. 29, 2013 - Tiffany Piatt, a first grade teacher at Ray E. Heller Elementary in Neodesha, Kan., was recently named the 2014 Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year by the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (KFAC).

The KFAC Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year award recognizes teachers who instill a passion for learning about agriculture within their students. The Foundation honors one teacher annually who has successfully integrated agricultural education into his or her pre-existing curricula. Piatt will be honored with the award at the Bookmark Art and Teacher of the Year celebration during Kansas Ag Month in March 2014 in Topeka.

Piatt integrates agriculture into her classroom as a way to enhance her science and social studies units. In the fall semester, she introduces students to harvesting apples and makes homemade applesauce. During the spring, Piatt teaches her first grade students about plant structure and growth, landforms, soil and the economy. She says teaching these aspects to kids at a young age helps them to better understand history, culture, family and economy.

"It is important for the students to start understanding the steps in the process of how consumers receive goods," Piatt says. "They have a high interest for these things at a young age and they're curious to know more about the world around them. I'm seizing that opportunity."

Flat Stanley is an idea Piatt was introduced to by a local blogger who helped her connect her first-grade classroom to agriculture all over the nation. Piatt's classroom used Flat Aggie, the female version of Flat Stanley to learn about the variety in agriculture. Each week, farmers would write and send pictures to Piatt's class that displayed the type of farming in



Tiffany Piatt, a first grade teacher at Ray E. Heller Elementary in Neodesha, Kan. is the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year.

their particular state.

"My students learned about drip irrigation, which they found fascinating," Piatt says. "The students also learned that school buses are sometimes used for watermelon harvesting! Technology plays a vital role in the advancement of agriculture, such as irrigation and equipment."



Piatt was able to incorporate math, science, social studies and reading through the Flat Aggie project. Piatt also teaches about farm safety and hopes to have a school garden this year.

"We'd like to congratulate Tiffany on her teaching accomplishments," said Cathy Musick, KFAC executive director. "She is definitely a role model for her peers and very deserving of the award. KFAC

Piatt teaches her first grade students about agriculture in other states using "Flat Aggie".

applauds teachers who implement agriculture into their classrooms."

As KFAC's Teacher of the Year, Piatt will have the opportunity to attend the National Agriculture in the Classroom (NAITC) Conference, which will be held in Hershey Pa., June 2014. High Plains Journal will sponsor her trip.

The Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year award is named in honor of Janet Sims, who passed away in June 2007 from Lou Gehrig's disease. Sims, an educator herself, had served on the KFAC board from November 2005 until her death.

Kansas Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture Excellence in Teaching Awards

A new addition to the Teacher of the Year program is the Kansas Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Excellence in Teaching Regional Awards. The Excellence in Teaching Grants are awarded to exemplary teachers who integrate agriculture into their classroom lessons and curriculum. There were five deserving teachers who received this award.



Arlene Cook (Brimm) is a first, second and third grade teacher at Service Valley Charter Academy in Oswego, Kan. In her classroom she emphasizes that food comes from agriculture, not from the grocery store.

"Using agriculture as a hands-on learning tool is fun and interesting for kids," Cook says. "Agriculture brings real-world situations into my students' lives as a literal aspect of the world around them."

A teacher at Burlingame High School, Thomas Fancher, is another recipient of the award. Fancher teaches fifth grade and seventh through 12th grades in Botany, Biology, Zoology, Earth Science, Physics and Environmental Science. Fancher has revitalized a school greenhouse and grows corn and soybeans with his students. The greenhouse has given the students a sense of accomplishment when they see their plants thriving.

DeLonna Lehman is a Kindergarten teacher in Hesston, Kan. At Hesston Elementary, Lehman integrates produce including the origin, life cycle and preparation; the care and life cycles of various animals including dairy cattle, chickens, horses and birds; seeds of apples, pumpkins, native wildflowers, grains and other plants are integrated into her classroom teachings.

"By using agriculture as center point in my teaching, I believe it has fostered an extraordinary excitement for learning that I hope endures a lifetime in a child's heart and soul," Lehman says.

The fourth winner of the Excellence in Teaching Award is Julia Price, who teaches at Community Elementary in Coffeyville, Kan. As a Kindergarten teacher, Price utilizes a local pumpkin patch to teach her students about agriculture. She shows them the different stages of a pumpkin, then they weigh and measure them and count the seeds. They also learn that the food they eat isn't just from the grocery store.

"Children learn that the pizza they eat is made from things that farmers produce," Price says. "They learn that the eggs and bacon they eat come from farms."

Tamala Snyder teaches ninth through 12th grades at Prairie View High School in LaCygne, Kan. As a math teacher, she implements agriculture as a teaching tool to teach Algebra and Calculus. She says she often gets calls from local farmers on how to measure area or volume. Snyder teaches math concepts by using agricultural related examples such as feed rations.

These five teachers will receive their choice of \$600 toward attending the National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference in Hershey, Pa., or a \$200 gift certificate to purchase agriculture education supplies for their classroom.

About Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

The Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. KFAC was founded in 1982 as part of a nationwide initiative to help students gain a greater awareness of the role of agriculture in the economy and society, so that they may become citizens who support wise agricultural policies. For more information, visit www.ksagclassroom.org or phone (785) 320-4350.

About Kansas Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture

The Kansas Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture was formed in 1998. The Foundation awards scholarships and grants that fund programs and projects designed to help improve agriculture and the quality of life in Kansas. The Foundation has awarded more than \$500,000 in scholarships and grants. Visit www.kfb.org for more information about the Foundation.

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