FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 15, 2017

NAITCO SPREADS AGRICULTURAL LITERACY MESSAGE
TO MORE THAN 450 EDUCATORS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

KANSAS CITY, MO – More than 450 educators from around the country will learn how to use agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies and more at the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization's (NAITCO) National Conference called 'Show Me Agriculture!' to be held June 20-23 at the Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center in Kansas City, MO.

NAITCO and Missouri Farm Bureau's Agriculture in the Classroom program will hold three days of workshops showing kindergarten through 12th grade teachers how to use agriculture to teach core subjects. It received partial funding for the conference from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute for Food & Agriculture (USDA/NIFA)

In addition, conference participants will go on traveling workshops of nearby agribusinesses and research facilities to learn about corn byproducts, grain production and the beef industry, among other stops. They also will hear from keynote speakers such as agriculture broadcaster Tyne Morgan, USDA/NIFA Director Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy and Greg Peterson of the Peterson Farm Brothers who rose to fame by posting music videos about farming using social media.

The conference will honor national teacher winners and a national Agriculture Advocate winner for the innovative ways they use agriculture to teach students about an important industry.

"The National Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference uses its workshops, awards ceremonies and tours of agricultural operations to show general education teachers in kindergarten through 12th grade how agriculture can be used effectively in formal classroom instruction," said Chris Fleming, president of the NAITCO.

NAITCO and Agrium, Inc. will roll out a new online game called 'Farmers 2050' that allows players to become virtual farmers who make day-to-day decisions about what to plant, how to care for it and how to market it and sell it. It's a follow up to educational game 'Journey 2050' developed for classrooms. Agrium partnered with NAITCO and Nutrients for Life to pilot test 'Journey 2050' in five states in the United States this school year.

Of the more than 450 conference participants registered, more than half are teachers from around the country, many of whom received scholarships provided by CHS Foundation, Inc. to cover their conference registrations.

The eight recipients of the 2017 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award, which is sponsored by the USDA-NIFA and Farm Credit Council and who will be honored at the conference, are:

- Georgia elementary STEM resource teacher Marla Garnto whose 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 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 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 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 her 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 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 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 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.

In addition, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture will honor at the conference several teachers and agriculture industry educators for using agriculture as an effective teaching tool as part of its White-Reinhardt Fund for Education program.

Georgia volunteer educator Carol Baker-Dunn will receive at the conference the 2017 Agriculture Advocate Award, which is sponsored by the National Grange. She won the award for her efforts to help establish the Georgia Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture which oversees agricultural literacy outreach in K-12 schools throughout the State of Georgia. In addition, she re-energized an agricultural literacy outreach program in schools in her community with an elementary school reading program, a school garden implementation effort, a book barn lending library and a classroom grants funding opportunity.

A big 'thank you' goes to national conference sponsors Agrium, Inc., American Egg Board, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, CHS Foundation, Inc., DuPont Pioneer, Farm Credit Council, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa State University Bioeconomy Institute, Kansas Soybean Commission, Land O'Lakes, Inc., National Grange, Protect the Harvest, Tractor Supply Co. and USDA/NIFA. Their support helped keep registration costs low so more teachers could attend.

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, awards programs and a national conference that demonstrate how agriculture can be used to effectively teach core subject areas.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT LISA GASKALLA AT info@naitco.org **or (352) 745-0246.**