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**NAITCO TO SPREAD AGRICULTURAL LITERACY MESSAGE
TO MORE THAN 400 EDUCATORS AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

PORTLAND, MAINE – More than 400 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 'Agriculture for ME on Land and Sea' to be held June 26-29 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine.

NAITCO and the Maine 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 aquaculture, artisan cheese making, the beef and dairy industries, among other stops. They also will hear from keynote speakers such as Maine Aquaculture Association Executive Director Sebastian Belle, and Maine Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Commissioner Walter Whitcomb.

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

"We are thrilled to host this year's National Agriculture in the Classroom National Conference in Maine," says Willie Grenier, president of NAITCO and executive director of Maine Agriculture in the Classroom. "The national conference will use workshops, awards, and tours of farms on land and in the water to show educators how effectively agriculture can be used in formal classroom instruction."

NAITCO and Nutrien, Ltd. Will announce new developments with its 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. Nutrien partnered with NAITCO to roll out 'Journey 2050' to teachers and students through Agriculture in the Classroom state programs this school year.

Of the more than 400 conference participants registered, about 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 2018 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award, which is sponsored by the USDA-NIFA and Farm Credit and who will be honored at the conference, are:

- Jacqueline Holmes, a third-grade teacher at Triangle Elementary in Mount Dora, 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 Effingham, 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 Las Cruces, 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 Ballston Spa, 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 Murfreesboro, 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 New Port News, 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 Mineral Point, 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 Laporte, 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.

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

New Mexico rancher and volunteer educator Margaret 'Margie' McKeen will receive the 2018 Agriculture Advocate Award, which is sponsored by the National Grange. She won the award for her efforts to establish New Mexico's largest and longest running agricultural event called 'McKeen Ranch Days,' an annual program held at her ranch where more than 30 teachers and 450 students learn about animal agriculture and life on a working ranch.

A big 'thank you' goes to national conference sponsors USDA/NIFA, CHS Foundation Inc., Nutrien Ltd., American Egg Board, Monsanto, Farm Credit, Land O' Lakes Foundation, 8Point Promotions, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, Corteva Agriscience, Ford Motor Co., among others. Their support helped keep registration costs low so more teachers could attend.

NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing 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.

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