



Florida Agriculture
in the Classroom, Inc.
AGRICULTURE KEEPS
FLORIDA GREEN

PO Box 110015, Gainesville FL 32611 (352)846-1391 FAX (352)846-1390
www.agtag.org

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Four Florida teachers win 2011 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award

GAINESVILLE – Four Florida teachers are being honored for bringing science to life for their students by using agriculture lessons such as raising chicken hatchlings in the classroom and operating a fully functioning school farm.

For their efforts, the teachers, who come from all over Florida, were chosen by Florida Agriculture in the Classroom as winners of the 2011 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award.

The award is given to teachers who strive to use agricultural concepts to bring science and technical lessons into their everyday classrooms. The teachers chosen went above and beyond by incorporating hands-on lessons that reiterate the importance of agriculture, while showing that science is approachable and enjoyable.

“These teachers have brought complex scientific ideas to everyday general education lessons,” said Vina Jean Banks, chairman and Florida Beef Council representative for Florida Agriculture in the Classroom. “And in doing so, have shown these students that science and agriculture is not only important to everyday life, but is enjoyable and fun as well.”

Lesa Roe, an elementary teacher at Leesburg Elementary in Leesburg, was chosen as the elementary school level winner and as the overall Florida winner. Her classroom lessons allow students throughout the school to have hands-on experiences watching the lifecycle of chickens as well as observe conservation methods by creating a variety of school gardens.

At the middle school level, Susan Ferrell, a teacher at Dowdell Magnet School in Plant City, brought ‘aqua-science’ to the classroom with aquariums, hydroponic gardens and fish farming.

The agri-science middle school level award was given to Lisa Friend, a science teacher at Manatee Academy School in Port St. Lucie. Friend incorporated agriculture lessons into the school’s pre-veterinarian program. Using poultry farming to teach biology and the beef industry to discuss economics, Friend incorporated science and agriculture lessons in a concrete manner, anchoring the concepts in students’ minds.

Students at Roosevelt Academy in Lake Wales can’t miss the lessons that Ray Cruze, a science teacher, has brought to the school. Cruze was honored at the high school level for bringing science to life by starting an entire farming business called “Roosevelt Farms,” a self-sustaining business that teaches students not only agriculture skills but business and

employability skills as well. Special needs students run the 10,000-square-foot farm that produces a variety of vegetables that are sold and donated in the community.

“These teachers not only show that agriculture is relevant in today’s society but that agriculture is at the forefront of many emerging technologies,” Banks said. “Science and agriculture must be taught to the next generation for the sake of our country’s future. These teachers have taken the time to pursue that worthy goal.”

The four teachers will be honored at the 2011 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference to be held June 22-25 in Fort Lauderdale.

Florida Agriculture in the Classroom is a non-profit organization based in Gainesville and charged with helping teachers in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade to educate students about the Florida agriculture industry. The group receives funding from sales of the agriculture specialty license plate called the “Ag Tag.”

For more information, contact Lisa Gaskalla at 352-846-1391 or via e-mail at gaskalla@ufl.edu

For more information on Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, visit: <http://www.flagintheclassroom.com/>