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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, including two Surry County Schools educators, learned 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' held June 26-29 at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, Maine.

NAITCO and the Maine Agriculture in the Classroom program held 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 went 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 heard from keynote speakers such as Maine Aquaculture Association Executive Director, Sebastian Belle, and Maine Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Commissioner, Walter Whitcomb.

The conference honored national teacher winners and a national Agriculture Advocate winner for the innovative ways they used 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. announced 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 the 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 were teachers from around the country, many of whom received scholarships provided by CHS Foundation, Inc. to cover their conference registrations.

Surry County Schools' educators, Mrs. Kathy Brintle, Computer Science Discoveries teacher at Gentry Middle and World History teacher at East Surry High School, Mr. Darrin Haywood attended, thanks to a generous grant from Surry County Farm Bureau. Surry County Farm Bureau funded the all-expense paid trip to for additional professional development as part of the Kenan Fellowship Mrs. Brintle and Mr. Haywood completed during the 2017-2018 school year.

In addition, American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, a national conference sponsor, honored teachers and agriculture industry educators for using agriculture as an effective teaching tool as part of its White-Reinhardt Fund for education program.

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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