



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **THREE FLORIDA TEACHERS FROM AROUND STATE RECEIVE FLORIDA AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM'S TOP HONOR**

**GAINESVILLE** – A Central Florida elementary teacher who uses schoolyard vegetable gardens and a hallway embryology project to teach students about the importance of agriculture is the overall winner of Florida Agriculture in the Classroom's (FAITC) Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award for 2013.

William Underly, a 23-year teaching veteran now at St. Cloud Elementary School in Osceola County, won for the elementary level and the overall Florida level.

He joins two other teachers – Shawn Walker of Gulf Coast Academy of Science and Technology in Spring Hill in Hernando County and Pamela Krauss of South Plantation High School in Broward County – to receive FAITC's Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award for 2013.

"We are proud to honor these teachers for their efforts to incorporate agricultural concepts in their math, science, botany and environmental classes," said Ken Barton, chairman of Florida Agriculture in the Classroom and executive director of the Florida Peanut Producers Association.

"These teachers' efforts to use these concepts give students a general understanding of the vital role agriculture plays in their lives," Barton said, "and a more in-depth study of the complicated processes involved in the life sciences."

Underly teaches third grade science, math and social studies, but he reaches out beyond his classroom to the 1,000 students in the school with seven vegetable gardens where students hand pollinate pumpkins and eat vegetables they grow in special dishes prepared in the classroom. He also has hallway incubators that hatch chickens, turkeys, ducks and other fowl throughout the school year.

"Utilizing 'planting to the dinner plate' as his guiding vision, Mr. Underly facilitates numerous projects to bring agricultural concepts to life in the classroom and within the school community," said his principal Bill Coffman in a letter of recommendation.

FAITC's middle school winner, Shawn Walker of Gulf Coast Academy of Science and Technology in Spring Hill, uses school gardens to teach students about the crops grown nearby in this county in the Tampa Bay area of the state.

Their botany and plant biology lessons consist of learning about cells as the basis of life, plant characteristics, plant classification, anatomy, life cycles, reproduction, seed dispersal,

vascular versus non-vascular plants, monocot versus dicot plants, angiosperm versus gymnosperm and tropism.

For FAITC's high school winner, Pamela Krauss of South Plantation High School, the classroom garden is the basis for all of her STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) lessons. Students develop and use a solar powered, rain barrel irrigation system to water their garden plants. In addition, they hear from classroom speakers from the agriculture industry such as beekeepers, local farmers and a representative from U.S. Sugar.

As part of their winnings, the three teacher winners will receive cash honorariums and all expenses paid trips to the 2013 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference "Land of 10,000 Ag Opportunities" June 25-28, 2013 in Minneapolis. They and teacher winners from around the nation will be honored at the conference.

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