

# **SEDI Announces \$16,000 in 2017 Teacher Awards to Northern Arizona Teachers**

Awards Event on May 11th Celebrated Excellence in Education

The Sustainable Economic Development Initiative (SEDI) recognized creative pre-K through grade 12 educators who incorporate the principles of sustainability in their teaching to prepare the leaders of tomorrow to deal with the world they will soon take over. This year, four award winners, four runner-up winners, and two Giving is Living Fund winners received a total of \$16,000 in cash awards from citizen donors who support education, the largest single award for excellence in education in Arizona.



The teachers were recognized and feted, along with 2017 Flagstaff STEM award winner Renda Fisk, at an event on May 11th at the 1899 Ballroom in Flagstaff thanks to the generous support of sponsors including Northern Arizona Healthcare Foundation, Verde Valley Medical Center, Flagstaff Medical Center, Wayne and Lynn Fox, John and Jawn Neville, W.A. Franke College of Business, and Linda Buchanan.

“This year brought SEDI innovative and creative applications from across northern Arizona resulting in one of the most highly competitive programs in our eight-year history of recognizing excellent teachers with these awards,” said Eric Marcus, SEDI executive director. “Our team of expert judges were hard put to select the best from so many outstanding teacher-led programs. The way the children were able to combine Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math into valuable real-world experiences is both impressive and heartening.”

The Teacher Awards for Sustainable Curriculum began as the brain-child of Lynn and Wayne Fox. Lynn has retired from teaching middle school in Flagstaff and Wayne has just recently retired as the Assistant Dean at the W.A. Franke College of Business at Northern Arizona University. As Lynn recalled, “The idea for the awards came while we were out walking and trying to think of ways to recognize teachers for their special efforts in the classroom. I know how difficult it is to provide today’s students with a great education when schools are so terribly underfunded. When we decided to step up and finance the fledgling program, we never dreamed it would become so successful so quickly.”

The awards are open to teachers in Apache, Coconino, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties and are divided into four grade categories: kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth, sixth through eighth and high school grades nine through twelve. The purpose of the awards is to recognize development and implementation of innovative educational approaches that instill in students the importance, value and

practicality of local environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability. As such, they mirror the economic development mission of SEDI in Arizona.

The programs judged to be the best for 2017 are: Joy Bruner of DeMiguel Elementary School for her “Worms at Work: School Composting Project” for kindergarteners; Judith Arnold of Marshall Elementary School for her “Monarch Project” for 5th graders; Jenna Samora of Sinagua Middle School for her “Harnessing the Wind” program for 7th graders; and Erik Wayne Hanchett of Show Low High School for his “All Seasons Aquaponics” program for 9th through 12th graders. The projects were judged for their innovative approaches, the actions taken, real-world applications, and sustainable outcomes. The projects had to demonstrate practical application that empowers action at the local level while aligning with the Arizona Department of Education Standards. Each winning teacher receives a check for \$2,500 as a thank you for their leadership.

While these award winners were outstanding, there were many others that also deserved recognition. This year, thanks to two additional generous donations, SEDI is able to offer four runner-up awards of \$1,000 each. These exceptional educators include: Jon Griffith and Molly Goulden of Mt. Elden Middle School Alpine Leadership Academy, Matt Sarnowski of Flagstaff Junior Academy, Tonya Snyder of Beaver Dam High School, and Jeffrey Taylor of Flagstaff High School.

“We wish we could do more for all the hard-working, under-appreciated teachers in Arizona,” said John Neville, former head of the SEDI Education Team. “Our children are our future, and their teachers help them into the world we’re creating for them. Today, children need all the help they can get, and these creative teachers are going well above and beyond to provide learning experiences that prepare them to deal with the challenges they will face.”

John Neville and Jawn McKinley also awarded two \$1,000 Giving is Living Fund special awards. The awards were given to Susan Brown of Northland Preparatory Academy and Suzie Maki of Kinsey Inquiry and Discovery School.