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Area STEM Teachers Honored

Fourth annual CT&T awards program recognizes outstanding educators

MILWAUKEE, WI (October 14, 2016) – Four Milwaukee-area STEM educators were honored last night for their exemplary teaching as part of the fourth annual Celebrate Teachers and Teaching awards ceremony, held this year at Discovery World in Milwaukee.

Sharon Tomski, a teacher at St. Thomas More High School, received the Distinguished Educator of the Year Award, and Craig Machut, a teacher at Rufus King High School, received honorable mention for the Distinguished Educator of the Year category. Lisa Laabs, a teacher at Holy Apostles School, received the Advanced Career Teaching Award, and Misa Sato, a teacher at Ronald Reagan High School, received the Early Career Teaching Award. Over 40 teachers were nominated for the 2016 awards. The top three award recipients received a \$1,000 cash award, Honorable Mention received a \$500 cash award, and their fellow nominees received a \$100 cash award. They, along with their fellow nominees, were honored in front of an audience of over 230 people celebrating teachers at the Thursday night event.

Tomski, a graduate of Marquette University, has 11 years of experience in teaching. In 2004, she partnered with her alma mater to successfully implement Project Lead the Way at St. Thomas More. She has continued to expand the program since that time, drawing on her 20 years of experience as a counterterrorism analyst to bring unique perspectives and innovative projects to her classroom. As a result of her efforts, St. Thomas students consistently perform better on PLTW exams than their peers.

Machut, a graduate of Edgewood College and UW-Milwaukee, has 11 years of experience as a teacher. Nominators say it's his use of project-based learning and his ability to build strong relationships with students that make him a successful teacher. Each year he has students design, build, install and monitor their own ecosystems in various places within the school building, giving visitors a tangible glimpse at the innovative and engaging teaching strategies happening within his classroom.

Laabs is a graduate of Cardinal Stritch University and Marquette University who has nine years' experience in teaching. She has been instrumental in Holy Apostles' Project Lead the Way program and piloted an after-school club, called 'Engineering the Future,' which offers students the ability to address real-life engineering problems within a group setting.

Sato, a graduate of Marquette University, has three years' experience as an educator. According to the principal at Ronald Reagan, Sato is deeply vested in her students, her school's vision and the International Baccalaureate curriculum at the school. She challenges her students, embraces extra projects and pursues initiatives that she believes will lead to greater success for her students.

Prior to the awards banquet, the Thursday night event opened with a panel discussion on making STEM education accessible for all. Panelists included Joel Brennan, president and CEO of Discovery World; Romel R. Tolbert, executive, GE Healthcare, MPS Partnership; Patricia Hoben, Ph.D., co-founder and CEO of Carmen Schools of Science and Technology; Angela Frey, Ph.D., associate dean of natural sciences, mathematics and technology division at Alverno College; Rich Merkel, executive director of STEM Forward; and, Rochelle Sandrin, STEM curriculum specialist for Milwaukee Public Schools.

Celebrate Teachers and Teaching is an initiative of the Education Deans of Greater Milwaukee (EDGM). The group is comprised of leadership from nine area institutions of higher education, including Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Carroll University, Concordia University Wisconsin, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Wisconsin Lutheran College, Marquette University, Mt. Mary University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. EDGM aims to leverage the assets of all institutions involved to support the continuous improvement of PK-21 education in the region, and serve the greater good, especially students in the Milwaukee Metro Area and learners of all types and ages. The awards program is just one of the ways EDGM seeks to uplift the outstanding work of some of Wisconsin's teachers.

The Celebrate Teachers and Teaching Steering Committee members will begin accepting nominations on January 15th for the 2017 CT&T event. The theme for next year's awards program is Early Childhood Education.

For more information, visit www.marquette.edu/education/education-deans/event or contact Karen Coy-Romano, Steering Committee Chair, at Karen.coy-romano@marquette.edu or 414-288-5574.

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High-resolution photos from Celebrate Teachers and Teaching 2016 are available upon request.