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Cal Poly Alumna Earns Multiple 'Teacher of the Year' Honors

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- A Cal Poly alumna from Buellton has earned state and national awards for her classroom teaching.

Alumna Tina McEnroe was named California's "2005 Outstanding Educator of the Year" by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom. As California's representative, she went on to receive the United States Department of Agriculture's 2005 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award. The agency's highest teaching award, it is given annually to five teachers in the United States.

McEnroe earned her special education teaching credential from Cal Poly's College of Education in 2000. She is a special education teacher, reading specialist, and seventh-grade language arts teacher at Vista de Las Cruces School in Gaviota.

Using several grants awarded to her by the Santa Barbara County Education Office, she has created lessons incorporating agriculture that are now shared with other teachers around the country. McEnroe's free, stand-alone teaching units on several subjects meet all California state standards and can be used for middle school or junior high classrooms.

One of these curriculum units, "Home on the Range," incorporates California State Standards for math, science, language arts and technology. In the interactive unit, eighth-grade students assume they have inherited $80,000 and an 800-acre cattle ranch, and must run it according to certain stipulations and set up a viable beef cow-calf operation. Students research cattle, choose the breed they want, design a brand, learn about the complex ruminant digestive system of cattle, and do a business plan for their operations using Excel spreadsheet software.

McEnroe used some of her grant money to take the Las Cruces' sixth grade class to Cal Poly. On the field trip, the students visited the Animal Science Department's beef facilities and were able to observe numerous animals and procedures.

In addition to the state and national awards for her teaching involving agriculture, McEnroe received a 2005 Outstanding Educator Award from Santa Barbara County Office of Education and a 2005 Vista Del Mar District Teacher of the Year Award.

She is currently a member of the Dean's Council at UC Santa Barbara's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education and Vice President of the Santa Ynez Valley Therapeutic Riding Academy.

For eight years she has directed and taught remedial summer school programs. She also spearheaded a school and community garden club at Las Cruces and started a program to teach English to the many Spanish-speaking, agricultural working parents of the school's students.

McEnroe attributes her philosophy on education to poet William Yeats: "Education should not be the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

To view the USDA press release about McEnroe's award, visit:

Editors note: Contact Cal Poly Public Affairs for contact information for McEnroe.