

Former Springbrook Director Receives WEM Excellence in Education Award

Siah St. Clair was one of seven educators from Minnesota who received a \$15,000 award from the WEM Foundation at the 15th Annual WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Brunch held at the Oak Ridge Conference Center in Chaska on Oct. 19.

St. Clair was surprised with the Excellence in Education Award, which recognizes superior contributions of educators whose leadership and dedication inspire a spirit of learning in students of all backgrounds and abilities outside the traditional education system and classroom.

St. Clair retired in May after 35 years as director of Springbrook Nature Center in Fridley. Under his leadership, Springbrook has been transformed into a leading environmental education center. St. Clair was invited to the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards brunch to give a presentation on Springbrook's partnership with local schools to bring hands on, experimental learning to students of all ages. During his tenure, St. Clair conducted and supervised environmental education for nearly 28,000 school classes and came in contact with more than 1 million students from 35 metro communities. St. Clair remarked that his passion for teaching was driven by his level of curiosity. He always wanted to know how things work. He feels when you can show your passion and use it to help others, it makes work enjoyable for all involved.

Educators and academic coaches from Marshall, West St. Paul, Rochester, Burnsville and Cold Spring were recognized for their outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student achievement.

Two honorees were named in each of three categories: The Teacher Achievement Award recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement; the Academic Challenge Coach of the Year Award recognizes classroom teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League Council; and the Ethics in Education Award recognizes exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum.

The WEM Outstanding Educator Awards program was created by the WEM Foundation and is administered by Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) in partnership with The Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC). The WEM Foundation supports teachers and acknowledges their important role in helping all children achieve academically. The awards program, now in its 15th year, has helped recognize education's often "unsung heroes," educators who meet the challenges and opportunities of teaching in a variety of settings.

Educators are nominated for the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program by students, parents, colleagues or community members. Those who accept the nomination provide additional information for review and consideration by Synergy and a blue ribbon selection panel, which reviews and ranks the nominees.

In addition to the seven statewide honorees, five additional educators were honored earlier this year as 2013 regional honorees and each received a \$1,500 award and trophy.

For more information on the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program and Synergy & Leadership Exchange, visit www.synergyexchange.org.

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