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For immediate release

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Mendota Heights Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Eric Friberg, a teacher from Henry Sibley High School in the West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools was surprised April 21 with the news that he is a recipient of a 2015 WEM Outstanding Educator Award for Teacher Achievement, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Friberg is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. He is one of two recipients of the WEM Foundation's statewide Teacher Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary teachers who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement.

"The students in Mr. Friberg's classroom excel because of his organization, knowledge and passion he displays. He is truly an artist; utilizing questioning techniques that helps his students discover solutions on their own," said associate principal Thomas Orth.

Friberg has been teaching for four years, and currently teaches biology at Henry Sibley High School. Friberg is driven to close gaps in education between students of different ethnicities. He traveled to Thailand to continue building skills with non-native English speakers that he could apply in a science classroom. Friberg also spent time in Guatemala improving his fluency in Spanish to better communicate with his students and parents.

"Mr. Friberg specifically asks for non-native speakers to be placed in his study hall so he can utilize his language skills to help them with their homework needs regardless of if the homework is biology related or not," shared a colleague.

In addition to classroom teaching, Friberg coaches the varsity Nordic ski team. Through aggressive fundraising under his leadership, the team was able to purchase 40 pairs of skis for team use, which has allowed all students to participate regardless of income.

In addition to the *Teacher Achievement Award*, two honorees are recognized with the *Ethics in Education Award* (exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum) and two with the *Academic Coach of the Year Award* (classroom teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges endorsed by the Minnesota Academic League Council).

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

In addition to the six statewide honorees, additional educators have been selected as regional honorees for 2015. These names will be announced in May.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange (Synergy) is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities.

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