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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Prague Educator Named Recipient of \$15,000 Award for Excellence

Jodi Prchal, a teacher at Falcon Ridge Elementary in the New Prague Area Schools was surprised April 7 with news that she is a recipient of a 2017 WEM Outstanding Educator Award as an Academic Challenge Coach, an honor that is accompanied by a \$15,000 award.

Prchal is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. She is one of two recipients of the WEM Foundation's statewide Academic Challenge Coach Award, which recognizes teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges approved by the Minnesota Academic League Council.

Prchal has been teaching and coaching for 24 years. She currently teaches fourth grade and coaches Math Masters, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, and Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (JSHS).

A parent shares, "Mrs. Prchal knows that teaching is more than addressing the child's intellect, but includes the child as a whole. For a child to learn, they must be included in the process and feel like a part of the learning community. Under her tutelage, students become very excited about what they are doing. She inspires them to find their full potential without making them feel pushed."

Prchal feels in a world of standardized testing, we need to make sure we are not losing sight of the importance of real-world, hands-on experimentation, exploration and inquiry. By promoting this type of environment, her students are passionate about learning and excited to come to school. She believes learning and having fun while learning is ultimately much more important than winning a medal.

Prchal adds, "The growth mindset is a powerful thing to see in action. By empowering students to believe they can be successful, they will rise to the challenge, experience success and do things they never thought they could."

"Jodi's enthusiasm for learning, willingness to try new things and can-do attitude have been key to the success of her students," said a colleague.

In addition to the *Academic Challenge Coach Award*, other educators are being honored 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 the *Teacher Achievement Award* (exemplary teachers who support, inspire, and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement).

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 2017. 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.