



# 2021 STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

The **STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture** award was created to shine a spotlight on teachers for the outstanding and innovative work they do in classroom & lab instruction, and in serving their local program and community.



The Spotlight award is an initiative of the Oklahoma State Teach Ag Results, or STAR, program. The goal of the STAR program to recruit and retain high quality, effective agricultural education teachers.

The following 10 teachers represent all five areas of Oklahoma and were nominated by their teaching peers. Along with their recognition, each teacher will receive a \$200 award. We are excited to shine a spotlight on these exceptional teachers, and we encourage all Oklahoma teachers to consider a peer they would like to nominate next year.

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Nathan Coulter, Valliant



“Mr. Coulter has been dedicated to providing students with well-rounded, experiential learning opportunities at Valliant. His program focuses on pragmatic learning that is a reflection of their communities' needs. The Valliant community benefits from their FFA chapter in a number of ways. Mr. Coulter and his students have conducted a Veterans breakfast for local military service men and women. Members have also conducted repair work to their school's security gates as a service to the Valliant school district. Mr. Coulter has been a fixture in the Valliant community and his students are routinely volunteering their time to give back. Mr. Coulter has a reputation as a leader in the agricultural education profession and has worked to improve each year he has taught.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Seth Reeves, Latta



“Mr. Reeves has developed a reputation for excellence as a classroom and laboratory instructor. Whether it is creating a fun, engaging video on his YouTube channel, or mentoring students through a challenging lesson or unit, Mr. Reeves is willing to go above and beyond the norm to reach his students. His integrity as an instructor is honorable. Mr. Reeves and his student were awarded an FFA Living to Serve grant to promote rainwater conservation to their community, and purchased and installed the gutters, piping and tanks for the rainwater harvesting program, as well as program planning for the event and made presentations to the community. Mr. Reeves has also led a kindness project called “Dude Be Nice” to improve positivity in their school and community. It is clear that Mr. Reeves places students in situations that help prepare them to be successful professionals and to grow personally. I personally know multiple people that have said Mr. Reeves was by far their best teacher.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Karie Dillinger, Elk City



“Mrs. Dillinger is constantly revising her methods of instruction to ensure that her students are able to master the tasks and assignments related to the course. She has developed new project based lesson plans and projects in the areas of floral design, greenhouse production, and Ag Communications. Her commitment to mastery learning is contagious among her peers on her campus as she leads several professional development workshops throughout the year. Mrs. Dillinger's mission to help empower students to become greater than they are is lived out on a daily basis. She has gathered clothing supplies for students who are needy and are unable to afford clothes, helped students gain employment in her community by developing relationships with local businesses, and has provided emergency care to student families during major storm tragedies by taking them in, cleaning storm damage, and or cooking food for them to eat until they have more permanent shelter. She is striving to build a community of intelligent citizens who care about making their community stronger.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Justin Kliewer, Thomas-Fay-Custer



“Mr. Kliewer demonstrates a genuine commitment to effectively teaching students and encouraging their academic and career success through participation in agricultural education classes and the FFA. Mr. Kliewer’s determination to achieve success begins in the classroom and radiates to the diverse SAE programs conducted by his students. He frequently provides service learning opportunities for his students through community service activities within the rural community of Thomas. Students participate in the Annual Christmas Parade and collect food products for the underprivileged. Mr. Kliewer displays a belief that an effective Ag-Ed and FFA program should reflect the values of the community and its patrons. Course curriculum is driven by student interest and their respective career goals. He effectively utilizes the input received from his advisory committee comprised of parents, agriculture leaders and business patrons. This combined effort allows Mr. Kliewer and the program to meet the needs of all concerned in the rural community of Thomas, Oklahoma.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Michael Gustafson, Moore



“Mr. Gustafson is an excellent agricultural education instructor that has always sought to have a balanced program. He is an effective FFA advisor who has been successful in many areas, from leadership activities to livestock show, Michael has demonstrated great ability to teach and motivate students. The Moore FFA Chapter has provided many opportunities of service learning for their students. They regularly have community service activities in the Moore area, and surrounding areas. Mr. Gustafson also organized a fundraiser for one of our fellow ag teachers and his students built items in the shop to sell in a silent auction for this individual.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

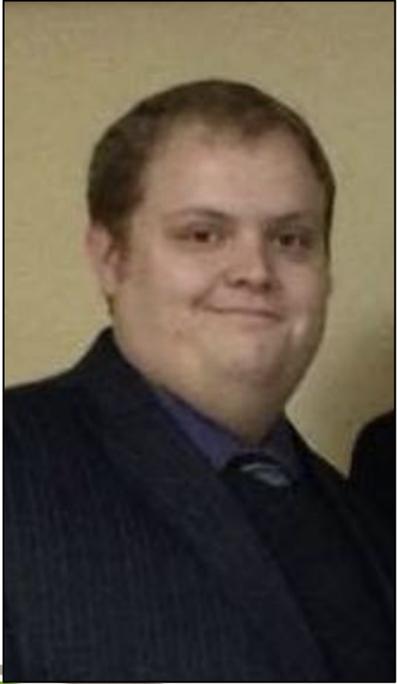
## Raquel Welchel, Ryan



“Ms. Welchel has grown the Ryan agricultural education program in terms of students and their involvement. Her willingness to try new projects and activities has given her students a greater variety of educational experiences to learn from. Ms. Welchel has used creative initiatives to engage her FFA members and motivate them to get involved. Her regular meetings have grown to be exciting events that feature the following: Greenhand member celebration, Corn Hole Tournament, Slip n' Slide Kickball, and a Paint War activity. Another innovative program that helped impact the community of Ryan was a Coyote Hunt that awarded prizes and fed participants. Ms. Welchel has a strong understanding of what motivates her students, and it has translated to more involvement and success in FFA events and competitions.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Sam Peterman, Cave Springs



“Mr. Peterman has always showed great commitment and dedication to his career in Agricultural Education when it comes to effective instruction. Mr. Peterman has constructed greenhouses, worked with Aquaponic systems, and has steadily worked with students in the shop program in constructing projects both small and large. He took time throughout each one of his school's holiday breaks to deliver food to students and needy families during this time of pandemic. He community support also shows through his program as the FFA members collected numerous amounts of can foods to donate to their local food bank. Mr. Peterman has implemented the PALs program at his school. This program is one that allows him to work hand-in-hand with his students teaching them how to develop different lesson plans, lessons, and teaching techniques. Mr. Peterman is always trying to find news ways to peak the interests of his students and show them how to become better leaders.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Tim Taylor, Okmulgee



“Mr. Taylor has been an outstanding instructor with a focus on STEM education and skill development. Mr. Taylor routinely teaches science in the context of agriculture through engaging lab lessons. He works with students to maintain a school garden and poultry projects to give every student applied practice in plant and animal science. Mr. Taylor honored his community by researching the history of Okmulgee FFA and the Dunbar High NFA chapter along with reconnecting with alumni. His respect and appreciation for history has been passed down to benefit his students. Mr. Taylor had the unique opportunity to attend Microsoft's global Hackathon to learn STEM techniques and "Hack for Good." Taylor’s team also imported topographical data into Microsoft’s popular video game Minecraft to digitally recreate a farm. He says he hopes this newfound ability gives students the opportunity to see farms, ranches and other agricultural systems from all over the world. As an early career teacher, Mr. Taylor is an example of a dedicated professional that has advanced our profession.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## William Hamand, Frontier



“Mr. Hamand has always impressed me with his ability to make a classroom enjoyable and educational at the same time. I have continued to see innovative ideas with his curriculum. He always has a hands-on component to what he is teaching and has the ability to fit it into each students’ lifestyle. Mr. Hamand continues to expand his teaching each year he serves in this profession and it is encouraging to see him be a true life long learner. There is no better coach, teacher and mentor for students than Mr. Hamand. He is dedicated to providing students with top notch experiences in his classroom and within FFA. I have personally seen Mr. Hamand sacrifice his time and personal resources for student achievement. He is the first to help them in the show ring, SAE projects and achieving career goals.”

# STAR Spotlight on Teaching Agriculture

## Laramie Lopp, Lomega



“Mr. Lopp is an excellent teacher who excels in teaching agricultural mechanics, ag communications, plant science and introductory coursework. He teaches students the basics of SMAW and GMAW welding, oxy-acetylene cutting, plasma, CNC and other important skills in the mechanics laboratory that could help students get a job after high school. In the classroom, his ag communications class has built a computer, and he is starting a podcasting program at his school. He manages and runs an effective teaching greenhouse as well. He makes regular contact with other teachers to figure out what new and innovative things they are trying, and is always willing to share his own successes. He loves having students help out around the school farm, because he believes that kind of hands on and kinetic learning is imperative to student success.”