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Governor's Office of Science, Innovation and Technology Announces Nevada's 2025-2026 STEM Teachers and Advocates of the Year

Carson City, NV — The Governor's Office of Science, Innovation and Technology (OSIT) proudly announces the recipients of the 2025-2026 STEM Teachers and STEM Advocates of the Year awards. These prestigious honors recognize educators and community leaders who demonstrate exceptional commitment to advancing STEM education and engagement across Nevada.

Awardees were selected through a rigorous application and review process led by OSIT's Regional STEM Networks. Applications were evaluated on multiple criteria, including student impact, leadership, STEM knowledge and training, experience, community collaboration, STEM philosophy, and innovation. Candidates submitted detailed applications that included responses about their work, resumes, letters of recommendation, and artifacts showcasing measurable impact. This comprehensive process ensures that honorees represent the highest standards of excellence in STEM education and advocacy.

"These educators and advocates are driving innovation in classrooms and communities across Nevada," said OSIT STEM Director Tracey Howard. "Their work ensures that every student has access to high-quality STEM experiences that prepare them for success in college, careers, and life."

STEM education is critical to Nevada's economic future. Industries such as advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, aerospace, healthcare, and technology are driving job growth across the state. According to recent workforce projections, STEM-related careers in Nevada are expected to grow nearly twice as fast as non-STEM jobs, offering higher wages and long-term stability. By equipping students with problem-solving, critical thinking, and technical skills, STEM educators and advocates ensure Nevada remains competitive in a global economy and continues to attract high-tech industries and investment.

State Winners

- **State STEM Teacher of the Year: Sara Boucher**
Sara Boucher, a K-5 STEM educator from Las Vegas, brings over a decade of experience in creating hands-on, technology-rich learning environments. With advanced degrees in

education and technology, Sara integrates robotics, 3D printing, and computer science into her classroom, inspiring creativity and problem-solving. Beyond teaching, she leads professional development, organizes educational events, and advocates for equity and inclusion in education.

- **State STEM Advocate of the Year: Jason Mattick**

Jason Mattick, Principal of the Academy of Arts, Careers & Technology (AACT) in Reno, has transformed AACT into Nevada's first Model STEM High School. His leadership has expanded high-demand STEM pathways, strengthened industry partnerships, and secured dual-enrollment opportunities, ensuring students gain authentic, real-world STEM experiences.

Regional Winners

- **Northwestern STEM Teacher of the Year: Leah Paquette**

Leah Paquette champions equitable, inquiry-driven STEAM education at Doral Academy, designing interdisciplinary learning experiences and leading professional development to empower educators and students alike.

- **Northwestern STEM Advocate of the Year: Dr. Megan Beckam**

Dr. Beckam, Teaching Associate Professor at UNR's NevadaTeach program, prepares future STEM educators through research-based practices and community-driven projects. Her leadership includes securing over \$1 million in grants and advancing STEM education statewide.

- **Rural STEM Teacher of the Year: Bridget Thompson**

Bridget Thompson, a National Board Certified Teacher and STEM leader at Riverview Elementary, integrates Project Lead the Way into her classroom and mentors educators to expand STEM opportunities in rural Nevada.

- **Southern STEM Teacher of the Year: Denise Frye Ward**

With over 30 years in education, Denise Frye Ward has transformed mathematics instruction at East Career & Technical Academy, growing AP programs and leading initiatives that close access gaps and promote STEM equity.

- **Southern STEM Advocate of the Year: Garrett Oberdin**

Garrett Oberdin, Senior Engineer at Nevada National Security Sites and founder of STEM for Nevada, brings hands-on STEM experiences to thousands of students through outreach and partnerships, inspiring future innovators.

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About OSIT

The Governor's Office of Science, Innovation and Technology works to advance STEM education and workforce development across Nevada, ensuring students and educators have access to high-quality resources and opportunities that prepare them for the future.

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