



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Umberger Named SC PLT Outstanding Educator of the Year

COLUMBIA — Amy Umberger of Gaston has been named the 2017 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee.

Umberger serves as the resident scientist at Dutch Fork Elementary, where she provides environmental education opportunities to students and staff.

“As an environmental educator, I value the principles that PLT is founded on,” said Umberger, who also was named the 2016-17 Dutch Fork Elementary Teacher of the Year. “Not only has this curriculum provided me with a wealth of experiences that I can provide for students and teachers that I work with, but it also has helped form my own beliefs of how humans impact this planet. I am humbled to receive this recognition as there are so many others here in our wonderful state that are equally deserving. Thanks so much for this honor!”



Amy Umberger

While at Dutch Fork, Umberger has worked diligently with staff and natural resource professionals to pursue certified Green Steps Schools status for the school by organizing several student-run projects, including gardening, creation of wildlife habitats and a nature trail, composting, water conservation and protection and recycling. She incorporates PLT experiences and engagements with student environmental clubs and is working to develop a schoolwide environmental literacy plan that integrates project-based learning models from PLT, Project WET and Project Wild.

After completing her PLT facilitator training in 2004, Umberger has facilitated several PLT workshops. The most successful workshop she co-facilitated was a PreK-8 curriculum workshop hosted by the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District at Benedict College in 2016. During the workshop, she trained a mix of pre-service undergraduates from Benedict College, pre-service education and science majors from the University of South Carolina and natural resource professionals.

Umberger mentors teachers and natural resource professionals, frequently leading professional development opportunities for formal and informal educators on environmental topics. She was involved in starting the South Carolina Outreach and Informal Educator Summit (SCOIES) in 2008, which is an annual gathering of informal educators serving K-12 audiences in the Midlands.

Umberger has also refined and promoted the Linking Ecology and Art of Floodplains (LEAF) program, which is an annual standards-based art and science program offered through a partnership between Congaree National Park and the Columbia Museum of Art.

Along with her work at Dutch Fork and with PLT, Umberger has served on the SC Science Council executive board and SC Outreach and Informal Educators Summit planning team and is a member of the SC Science Education Leadership Association, Environmental Education Association of South Carolina, North American Association for Environmental Education and Magnet Schools of America.

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Project Learning Tree is a nationwide, award-winning environmental education program that supplements curricula used by teachers, parents, and community leaders for students from preschool to 12th grade. A program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, PLT uses trees and forests as windows on the world to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship to students while fostering professional development among the educators who use it.