

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, June 3, 2016

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## Cooper Named SC PLT Outstanding Educator of the Year

COLUMBIA — Chanda Cooper of Bishopville has been named the 2016 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee.

Cooper is the education program coordinator at the Richland Soil & Water Conservation District in Columbia, where she provides environmental education opportunities to students, teachers, farmers, natural resource professionals and the general public in the Midlands.

“I am honored and humbled by this recognition and wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to my mentors, colleagues and partners in natural resources education across the state,” Cooper said. “They are my role models, teachers, co-conspirators and fellow laborers, and without them I would not be here.”

Cooper has a deep respect and love for the land, and her mission is to help those around her better appreciate the resources sustaining life on Earth and learn to be better stewards of those resources. She conducts more than 50 classroom presentations each year for preK-12 students on topics ranging from forestry to water conservation and is heavily involved with professional development programs for K-12 teachers and environmental educators.

Since completing her PLT facilitator training in 2013, Cooper has organized, hosted and co-facilitated four PLT PreK-8 curriculum workshops and one joint PLT/Project WET workshop, training nearly 100 educators. The most successful and engaging PLT workshop Cooper has co-facilitated was a PLT PreK-8 curriculum workshop in February hosted by the Richland Soil & Water Conservation District and Benedict College. During this workshop she presented to a diverse audience of classroom teachers, informal environmental educators, science majors/pre-service educators from the University of South Carolina and education majors/pre-service educators from Benedict College.

Along with her PLT classroom presentations and work with PLT workshops, Cooper serves on the PLT steering committee and was elected vice president of the committee in 2015. She also promoted PLT, Project WET and Project WILD workshops throughout the state while serving on the board and communications committee with the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina.

Congratulations, Chanda, and thank you for your efforts on behalf of PLT and environmental education in South Carolina!



SC PLT Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year Chanda Cooper guides students at Cutler Jewish Day School on an exploration of their outdoor classroom in September of 2015. Cooper conducts more than 50 presentations each year for preK-12 students on topics ranging from forestry to water conservation.