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Four Teachers of the Year named in Wisconsin

Herb Kohl Educational Foundation gives \$3,000 to each honoree

MADISON — “It’s going to be a great school year with everyone — teachers, parents and families, and other school staff — ready to help our students succeed,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers in announcing Wisconsin’s four Teachers of the Year.

During surprise announcements at each teacher’s school, Evers brought a reminder of the importance of the work teachers do to educate children and shape the future. In addition to the recognition, each teacher will receive an unrestricted award of \$3,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation, which supports the Teacher of the Year program. The foundation has awarded approximately \$10.4 million to Wisconsin educators, students, and schools over the years. Wisconsin’s four Teachers of the Year are

- **Suzanne Devine**, a seventh- and eighth-grade science and social studies teacher at Northstar Middle School in the Eau Claire Area School District, Middle School Teacher of the Year;
- **Roger King**, an agriscience teacher at Holmen High School in the Holmen School District, High School Teacher of the Year;
- **Amy Reed**, a special education teacher at Kimberly High School in the Kimberly Area School District, Special Services Teacher of the Year; and
- **Mai Shoua Xiong**, a first-grade teacher at the Academy of Accelerated Learning, a Milwaukee Public Schools International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme School, Elementary Teacher of the Year.

“Our state needs intelligent, qualified teachers to help our students learn and to keep pace with the nation and the world,” Evers said. “Teachers’ contributions too often get lost or taken for granted, so it’s important to recognize their important work.”

A panel of educators, parents, and community leaders selected the four Teachers of the Year from a pool of 86 public school Kohl Teacher Fellows who were named in spring 2015. Kohl Teacher Fellows, nominated by colleagues, parents, students, or members of their community, are chosen for their ability to inspire students’ love of learning, instructional innovation and leadership, and commitment to community involvement.

“The Teacher of the Year program highlights the many contributions educators make to our children, schools, and communities,” said Herb Kohl, philanthropist, businessman, and former U.S. Senator, who co-sponsors the

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Teacher of the Year program through his educational foundation. “They are leaders who go above and beyond to help all children achieve.”

Middle School Teacher of the Year

Suzanne Devine, a seventh- and eighth-grade science and social studies teacher at Northstar Middle School in Eau Claire, has a commitment to her students that extends far beyond just what they learn in the classroom. She seeks to meet the needs of students facing challenging times outside of school in every way she can. “Anyone can teach a classroom full of gifted students, but I have a special place in my heart for those whose personal struggles interfere with learning,” she said. She is involved with the National Science Teachers Association and updates her lesson plans and curriculum as she finds new and innovative ideas. She has taken more than 100 students to Women in Science, an event encouraging female students to pursue careers in the science field. Additionally, she is involved in many charitable and service organizations in her community and strives to include students in these projects whenever possible. Community service activities have included sidewalk accessibility and trash pick-up in the Northstar neighborhood and having students ring bells for the Salvation Army, volunteer at a local food pantry, and visit nursing home residents.

Devine attended the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where she earned a bachelor of science degree. She began her teaching career at St. Joseph’s Elementary School in Menomonie. She also taught at Colfax Elementary School and Cadott Middle School before starting with Northstar Middle School in 2004.

High School Teacher of the Year

Roger King, an agriscience teacher at Holmen High School, centers his teaching philosophy on practical applications. His students investigate real world issues and problems, develop research and questioning skills, develop problem solving skills and gather “knowledge through a hands-on approach to each lesson.” In the school greenhouse, students “tackled the real world problem of growing food through alternative methods ... so not only have they learned an alternative method of growing food, but they are harvesting and providing produce to their fellow students in the lunch room,” he said. Believing that parent involvement is essential for student success, King asks parents to serve on an Agriscience Advisory Committee so they can provide a parent perspective on lessons and to make sure that future career interests are covered in the classroom. He also invites parents on field trips to give them a better understanding of the curriculum and the industries that support it. An active member of the community, King volunteers at the La Crosse dairy breakfast, supervising 4-H and FFA students as they serve more than 2,000 attendees. He also volunteers in the school gardens, serves as the Holmen FFA adviser, coaches football, and serves as the co-chair for the La Crosse County Interstate Fair Small Animal Barn Committee.

King holds a bachelor’s degree in agriculture education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, and he earned a master’s degree in professional development from University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Special Services Teacher of the Year

Amy Reed, a special education teacher at Kimberly High School, focuses on teaching not only core curricula but also understanding what each student would like to do after high school. This allows her to help students develop a plan to get there, teaching them not just what to learn, but how to learn. When working with teams to set up Individualized Education Programs, Reed begins with parents ahead of time. “I send parent questionnaires and conduct parent and student interviews. This process enables me to uncover additional student strengths and interests, unrealized dreams, frustrations and concerns ... to get students on track to meeting their goals,” she said. Reed has been instrumental in many initiatives to improve inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities within the school and in the greater community. She helped start a week-long community event to increase awareness that

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culminates with a basketball game between high school students and Special Olympians. She seeks to increase the social benefits those with disabilities can experience through an annual dance, inviting all families from neighboring schools who have a student with a disability to attend.

Reed attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh where she earned a bachelor's degree in special education and elementary education and earned her master's degree in educational leadership. She began her career at the Boys & Girls Club of Oshkosh before accepting a position as a special education teacher working with individuals with intellectual disabilities at Kimberly High School in 2002.

Elementary Teacher of the Year

Mai Shoua Xiong, a first-grade teacher at Milwaukee Public Schools' Academy of Accelerated Learning, considers it her role to "mentor and develop my students to reach their greatest potential by setting high standards for every student and finding various ways for them to achieve the standards." As someone for whom English was a second language, Xiong is passionate about improving education for children who are English language learners. She involves parents as an important part of their child's education. "I believe a student's No. 1 teacher is the parent and educational success is most achievable when there is evident teamwork between parents, teachers, and community," she said. Xiong offers opportunities for parents to be involved by volunteering for field trips, reading with small groups, and working on small projects as well as events such as Pastries for Parents, Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, and a Thanksgiving feast. Xiong serves as the webmaster for her school's website and was a model classroom in the "Teacher Effectiveness for all Learners" project to help other teachers improve literacy instruction. She also serves as an adviser at the Hmong American Peace Academy on the committee for Hmong as a foreign language.

Xiong holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Alverno College, and she earned a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She began her teaching career at Albert Story School in 1998 before starting with Academy of Accelerated Learning in 1999.

Evers will honor each Teacher of the Year during the Sept. 17 State of Education address and awards program at the State Capitol. Later this fall, a committee will select one of the four Teachers of the Year to represent Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program. That individual will receive an additional \$6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation.

Nominations for the Kohl Teacher Fellowship program are open until Sept. 25. Visit the Herb Kohl Educational Foundation website, <http://www.kohleducation.org/>, to nominate a teacher.

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NOTES: More information about each Teacher of the Year can be found in individualized news releases linked from this document. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2015_83.pdf.