



P R E S S R E L E A S E

BLOOMINGTON, IL- The Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom program is pleased to announce the 2009 Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher of the Year is **Jo Ann Wenzel** of Pearl City Elementary, District #200, Pearl City, **Stephenson County**. Mrs. Wenzel will receive a plaque and a trip to the 2009 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference in St. Louis, Missouri. She will also be the Illinois nominee for the National Excellence in Teaching Agriculture Award.

Agriculture, and in particular Illinois agriculture, has always been a part of Jo Wenzel's life and livelihood and she shares this passion for agriculture all year long with all her fourth grade social studies students. Wenzel's year-long project is called *Exploration Monday*. Her classes follow the journey of Lewis and Clark using stories and experiences from their printed journal. As an educator in a rural community, she has seen her student population change from agricultural based families to service oriented families. As a teacher with 23 years in the classroom, she recognizes the urgent need for agriculture instruction in her daily curriculums. Wenzel is a past Summer Agricultural Institute graduate 1994 & 1998; and a past participant at the National AITC Conference in Chicago in 2000. Mrs. Wenzel was also an International Ag Education for Summer Ag Participants at Anger, France, where she had the opportunity to travel for four weeks with a group of teachers to view agriculture in another country.

Mrs. Wenzel is very proud of the rural farm community she lives in and passes that on to her students with enthusiasm. Jo and her family are actively involved in farming and they share a common bond and commitment to the industry, making Mrs. Wenzel this year's leader for Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom.

Congratulations may be addressed to:

Jo Ann Wenzel
Pearl City Elementary, District #200
100 South Summit
Pearl City, IL 61062

Runner Up

Runner Up for the Teacher of the Year is **Lynne Jeffries**, Greenbay Elementary, North Chicago, **Lake County**, Illinois. Mrs. Jeffries has been an enthusiastic supporter of Ag in the Classroom, participating with Lake Counties Ag in the Classroom program since 1996. Each year, Lynne continues to use Ag in the Classroom to advance her school garden and student experiences. Mrs. Jeffries works diligently to incorporate many lessons that pertain to agriculturally related topics throughout each school year. Her creative and enthusiastic lessons give her students fun and interesting ways to learn about agriculture and an appreciation for the impact that agriculture has on their daily lives.

For more information about Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom Program and the Teacher of the Year Award, contact Kevin Daugherty 309-557-3334 or kdaugherty@iffb.org