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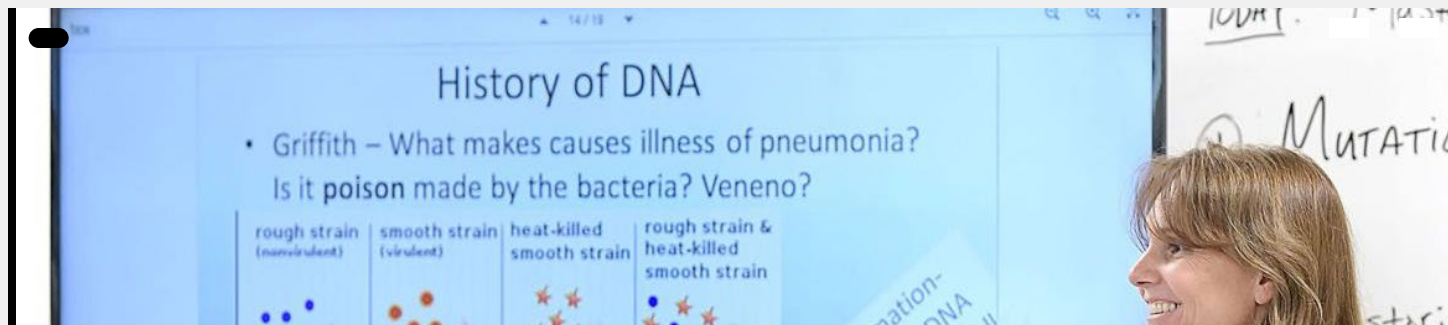
NEXT UP

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Logan High educator awarded Utah biology teacher of the year

By Sean Dolan staff writer Feb 6, 2017



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The Utah Science Teachers Association has recognized Logan High School educator Shaunda Wenger as the Outstanding Biology Teacher of the Year.

Wenger said she credits the award to both her day-to-day teaching style and her collaboration with the USU STARS! Gear Up program, which connects students with projects that aren't part of the regular curriculum. Gear Up has allowed some of her students to collect data on monarch butterflies and experiment on radish seeds that were sent in space.

"I just like to expose them to as many opportunities as I can," Wenger said. "It's a pretty big world."

John Taylor, president-elect of the Utah Science Teachers Association, said the annual award takes into account a teacher's entire body of work. The organization asks for nominations from high school science teachers around the state and chooses the top performer in each subject. The winners will be recognized at the annual USTA conference on Friday.

Kris Monson, Gear Up coordinator at Logan High, said Wenger goes above and beyond what she is required to do.

"When we reached out to her to work with Gear Up, she just jumped on the chance because she knew she could do something more," Monson said.

Gear Up is a federal grant program that encourages students get into and graduate from college. It provides funding for ACT prep classes, college visits and helping students find funding options like scholarships and financial aid. The program also connects researchers at USU to high school teachers to show students labs and lessons they otherwise wouldn't be

exposed to.

Monson said she helps facilitate relationships, coordinate the grant funding and purchase supplies, but once Wenger connected with USU professors, “she just took off.”

“Honestly, I haven’t had to do a lot because she’s so self-motivated and has such great ideas,” Monson said.

Gear Up recently allowed three of Wenger’s students to study the [germination rates of radish seeds](#) that orbited the Earth in a Russian space satellite. Monson said having access to connections and funding allows students to work on interesting projects, but it also takes a motivated teacher.

Wenger said the Gear Up projects get attention, but in terms of day-to-day instruction she tries to make sure her lessons are accessible to a wide range of students. She said she is sensitive to her students’ needs and tries to specialize her instruction for different groups.

Stephanie Hinton, ESL teacher at Logan High, said Wenger goes above and beyond to help her Spanish-speaking students. She said most teachers will make a few assignments accessible, but Wenger does her best to translate worksheets and provide Spanish textbooks. She said her ESL students look forward to Wenger’s class.

Andre Nguyen, a 10th-grade student who worked with the space seeds, said Wenger is a hardworking teacher who inspires her students to try their best.

Michelle Jung, also a 10th-grader, said Wenger’s sense of humor encourages students to learn.

Tags

Logan Utah

Shaunda Wenger

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Logan City School District

Biology

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Kris Monson

Teacher

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