



Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation

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EIGHT RECEIVE 2011 AGRISCIENCE AWARDS

Two Scientists: a Professor at The University of Missouri and Professor at the University of Georgia; three High School Educators from New York, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania; and three High School Agriscience Students from New Mexico and two from Florida, Receive \$145,000 in Monetary Awards

July 12, 2011, Washington, D.C. – On July 12, the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation and the American Farm Bureau Federation® will hold the Second Annual *Agriscience Awards* presenting \$145,000 in monetary awards at a luncheon ceremony in Washington, D.C.

AGRISCIENCE AWARDS

\$25,000 Distinguished Agriscience Scientist Award - Randall Prather, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Reproductive Biotechnology, Division of Animal Science, The University of Missouri, Columbia, MO. Dr. Prather's research has focused on the early mammalian embryo, and he cloned the first pigs and some of the first cattle, by nuclear transfer, while at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Now at the University of Missouri, his lab has made over 495 cloned pigs representing over 25 different genetic modifications for agriculture and medicine. Dr. Prather is a co-Director of the NIH-funded National Swine resource and Research Center. Dr. Prather will also receive up to \$25,000 in research funds.

\$25,000 Distinguished Agriscience Scientist Award - Andrew H. Paterson, Ph.D., Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Georgia. Dr. Paterson is the head of the Plant Genome Mapping Laboratory, and is jointly appointed in three Departments (Crop and Soil Science, Plant Biology, and Genetics). His research uses genomic tools and approaches to study crop improvement, plant biodiversity, and molecular evolution. His lab has contributed to knowledge of sorghum, cotton, sugarcane, peanut, Miscanthus, switchgrass, Bermuda grass, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, rice, tomato, maize and other crops, as well as several major weeds, one nitrogen-fixing bacterium (*Azospirillum*), and a group of viruses important in poultry. Dr. Paterson will also receive up to \$25,000 in research funds.

\$10,000 Agriscience Educator Award - Michele Sutton, Teacher, Tompkins Seneca Tioga BOCES, Ithaca, NY. Michele left a ten-year career in government to pursue an education degree when she realized she wanted to work with students in the field of agriculture. During her first secondary school teaching position, she transformed an outdated, struggling program of 13 students into a program of more than 100 students in two short years. She is now a teacher of the BOCES New Visions in Life Sciences program for area high school students at Cornell University where she has taught agricultural science for the past six years.

\$10,000 Agriscience Educator Award - Melissa Braun, Teacher, Gillett Secondary School Gillett, WI. For the last eight years, Melissa has taught agriscience to students in grades 7-12. This Fall she begins a new venture at Shawano High School in the agriculture department. Melissa teaches a wide array of agriscience courses, but has a great interest in the areas of food science, horticulture, and greenhouse management. Her teaching includes many hands-on activities and field trips to reinforce the scientific principles throughout her lessons. She follows an agricultural education model which involves all components--classroom instruction, FFA involvement and a Supervised Agricultural Experience Project.

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\$10,000 Agriscience Educator Award - Paul Heasley, Teacher, State College Area School District, State College, PA. Mr. Heasley has taught Agricultural Sciences in grades 9-12 for 30 years. The program's courses are grouped in Career Paths including: Ag Mechanics, Animal Science, Natural Resources and Plant Sciences. A senior year option includes a "Dual Enrollment" with The Pennsylvania State University's College of Agricultural Sciences and 18 different agricultural Science courses provided on campus or through the World Campus. The program has active chapters in the FFA and Young Farmers.

\$5,000 Agriscience Student Award - Laura Lane, Senior, Aztec High School, Aztec, NM. Laura's love of science inspired her project to tackle indicators of soil ecosystem health for oil and gas reclamation. One out of every three abandoned wellsite does not reestablish plant biodiversity, leaving thousands of acres of undesirable soil that cannot support grazing. Laura has worked with Habitat for Humanity, and last summer went to Guatemala on a build. In the Fall she plans to attend New Mexico Tech to study pre-medical; and major in biochemistry or chemical engineering. After her undergraduate studies, she wants to attend medical school and become a trauma doctor.

\$5,000 Agriscience Student Award - Bhiravi Rathinasabapathi, Senior, Eastside High School, Gainesville, FL. Bhiravi's interests include science, service and literature. She is currently researching the biofortification of crops with iron. Biofortification is the breeding or genetic modification of plants to increase their nutrient content. Bhiravi is examining the effects of the overexpression of a ferritin gene on plants' iron content and biomasses. This research may eventually lead to an iron-biofortified crop. Such a crop would combat anemia, which affects an estimated two billion people worldwide.

\$5,000 Agriscience Student Award - Stephen Bethel, Senior, Lake Brantley High School, Altamonte Springs, FL. Stephen's research "*Evaluation of Ubiquitin Promoter Express Abilities for Potential Use in Transgenic Grape Vine*" (*Vitis vinifera*), explored consumer-friendly genetic alternatives to replace viral DNA currently used in genetically modified produce. Stephen met Nobel Laureate, Dr. Martin Chalfie, a biological sciences researcher who first demonstrated the value of GFP, a luminous genetic tag that Stephen used in his work. This Fall, Stephen will attend the University of Florida Honors Program in Aerospace Engineering.

The Foundation and American Farm Bureau Federation have formed a public-private partnership to sponsor eight ***Agriscience Awards***. The competition was open to scientists, high school educators and students around the country who are judged to exemplify excellence in the field of Agriscience, and to highlight the importance of agriculture in the 21st century. In addition to the \$25,000 presented to the scientists for their current work, each will receive up to \$25,000 in research funds.

Sponsors

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is an independent Federal government agency established by Congress in 1992 to "encourage and support research, study and labor designed to produce new discoveries in all fields of endeavor for the benefit of mankind." The Foundation has created ***Frontiers of Discovery-Work in Progress and Discover the Future*** programs that honor "cutting edge" innovations and promote innovative ideas of America's scientists, educators and youth. For more information, please visit: www.columbusfdn.org or contact Judi Shellenberger at: (315) 258-0090.

The America Farm Bureau Federation is the unified national voice of agriculture, working through our grassroots state and county Farm Bureaus to enhance and strengthen the lives of rural Americans and to build strong, prosperous agricultural communities. Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, voluntary organization governed by and representing farm and ranch families united for the purpose of analyzing their problems and formulating action to achieve educational improvement, economic opportunity and social advancement and, thereby, to promote the national well-being.