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SVSU, MiSTEM Recognize, Reward ‘STEM Stars’

Students in eight Michigan counties will see a boost to their STEM education thanks to the STEM Center at Saginaw Valley State University and the MiSTEM Network – East Central Michigan Region.

The two organizations recognized 26 K-12 educators as “STEM Stars,” honoring their hard work, dedication and contributions to education on science, technology, engineering and math. Each recipient received a \$250 award to benefit STEM education in his or her classroom or program, as well as a 3D-printed keepsake designed by Cardinal Solutions at SVSU and produced by the SVSU Independent Testing Laboratory. Award winners were selected from a pool of 49 nominees.

The 2021 STEM Stars represent schools in Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland and Saginaw counties. This is the second year SVSU and MiSTEM have recognized educators for their efforts. Nominations were reviewed by a selection committee.

“The variety of nominees stood out this year,” said Adrienne Cole, director of STEM@SVSU. “At all levels, educators are going above and beyond to deliver exceptional STEM experiences to their students, and they’ve been doing it throughout a pandemic.”

This year’s award recipients included teachers, administrators, instructional and IT specialists, and *FIRST*® Robotics and *FIRST*® LEGO® League coaches. They represented schools from each of the eight counties within the MiSTEM Network – East Central Michigan Region. The list of award recipients with portions of nominator comments is attached.

The MiSTEM Network is funded through a statewide grant and promotes the impact of STEM on economic development and education in the state. The purpose of STEM@SVSU is to develop a STEM talent pipeline to meet the current and future needs of the Great Lakes Bay Region by providing professional development for STEM teachers, engaging STEM professionals to enhance STEM learning and increasing experiential learning for students at all grade levels. For more information about SVSU’s STEM program, visit svsu.edu/stem or follow the program on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

##SVSU##

Editor’s note: Following is an image of the STEM Star award that recipients will receive, designed by Cardinal Solutions at SVSU and produced by the SVSU Independent Testing Laboratory.

Please see information below on each of the recipients.



2021 STEM Stars Award Recipients:

- Rob Baker, physics and engineering teacher, Frankenmuth High School

“He has continued to expand and develop this course’s scope . . . running the program entirely on grant funds since its inception. Mr. Baker’s engineering classes have now expanded to include three levels for students who wish to deeply explore their interest in mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, programming, and more.”

- Carrie Carncross, STEM teacher, Farwell Elementary and Middle Schools

“Carrie is not afraid to try something new, different, or unusual in the name of education. Even when her students were virtual, she was preparing STEM activities for her students to try at home with readily available materials. Carrie is helping to inspire the next generation to be creative and think outside the box.”

- Amalia Cirilo, STEM teacher, Saginaw Public Schools

“Mrs. Cirilo ... sets high expectations for her students and continuously finds creative and inventive ways to inspire and motivate all of her students to be successful contributors to the STEM Program.”

- Ben Cooper, science teacher, Valley Lutheran High School

Ben Cooper is constantly working to improve his own professional learning. ... All that he learns is brought back to school and shared with colleagues and students. He then designs opportunities for students to get actively involved in projects of their own.”



- **Andrew Doerr, high school math teacher, Sacred Heart Academy**

“Andrew is always working to further STEM education at Sacred Heart Academy. He spearheaded creating the robotics team at Sacred Heart 2 years ago. The students who have been part of the team thoroughly enjoy it and have found new passions through it.”

- Chad Donahue, science teacher, Gladwin High School

“Chad has single-handedly changed the life science programs here at Gladwin High school. He used his botany class to turn our (at the time) rarely used greenhouse into a

community tradition where numerous flowers and vegetables are sold every spring to raise money to enrich and continue the program.”

- Rebecca Field, teacher, Kolb Elementary School

Rebecca is an incredible teacher with a strong passion for science and STEM initiatives. She works to introduce her students to the marvels of science with experiments, demonstrations, and even does a classroom study on worms. Rebecca has even worked to branch out beyond her classroom to provide STEM kits for our entire building.”

- Darryl Greathouse, Garber Robotics team mentor, Garber High School, Cramer Junior High School

“Staying after practice, programming robots for opposing teams, and teaching young people about the wonders of coding: these are just a few of the things that Mr. Greathouse does for those in need.”

- Bruce Hadd, teacher and LEGO® League coach, Coleman Elementary School

“Bruce teaches math and social studies to 6th grade students, yet he gives of his time after school to teach LEGO® League because he sees it as such an important pre-cursor to our district robotics team. He has diligently worked to provide this offering – even this year with COVID restrictions requiring him to constantly pivot in order to continue the offering.”

- Mark Hellebuyck, chemistry teacher and Robotics coach, Bay City Central High School

“Mark has revitalized the students’ learning about science in our district, making it interesting and exciting, and literally bringing it to life. He goes beyond teaching the CCSS by bringing hands on learning to the classroom, through a multiple of ways. ... I have never seen students so excited about science.”

- Amy Huff, teacher and Robotics coach, Meridian Early College High School

Ms. Huff is very dedicated to her students and always goes above and beyond to give them the best experiences. She runs the robotics team outside of school hours to bring important STEM experiences to our small, rural district.”

- Connie Kennedy, instructional support specialist, math and science focus, Bay City Public Schools

“She goes above and beyond to equip the staff and students of Bay City Public Schools with amazing STEM experiences. Besides assisting the district science, math, and STEAM teachers with curriculum, she also works hands-on with students in the classroom.”

- Don Killingbeck, superintendent, Hemlock Public Schools

“Dr. Killingbeck is a visionary. He understands that we cannot prepare students for the jobs of tomorrow with a business-as-usual approach. Don is a catalyst for change.”

- Eric Marshall, teacher, Nouvel Catholic Central High School

“Eric is truly one of our teacher leaders. He is well respected by his colleagues and highly regarded by our students and parents. ... He represents the best values of our institution on a daily basis.”

- Misti Particka, STEM teacher, Handy Middle School

“She provides opportunities that many of our at-risk students would never have. ... She also went ABOVE and BEYOND during our pandemic raising funds to make teacher shields for our district employees at all levels and raised money to make shields to help area hospitals provide PPE.”

- Thomas Pashak, principal/teacher, alternative education, adult education, Clare Pioneer High School

“Tom is the driving force behind multiple STEM-related programs at Pioneer High School including introducing adding a greenhouse in which students grow some of their own food, aquaponics & hydroponics programs, and integrating technology throughout our district. His efforts have led to a very motivated population of adult and alternative education students who are project and outcome focused.”

- Richard Reece, IT specialist, Calvary Baptist Academy

“Richard has worked tirelessly for the past 5 years with our FTC and FRC teams. ... Several of our students that have graduated are now pursuing the engineering field from his encouragement and dedication to the students.”

- Emily Schmidt, STEAM teacher, K.C. Ling Elementary and Hemlock Elementary schools

“Emily Schmidt is not just an amazing teacher, she’s also an incredible leader. She has created our entire elementary STEAM program. ... Even during this school year when we have all found ourselves teaching virtually, she continues to take her students to a higher level of thinking by providing experiences for kids and their families to do at home.”

- Molly Schoener, middle school science/tech teacher, St. Brigid Catholic School

“Molly is always excited to teach science to our middle school students. She is creative and always finds new ways to teach the material. Her enthusiasm brings an energy to the students and they thrive in her class!”

- Joseph Trommater, science, data and special project consultant, Clare-Gladwin Regional Education Service Division

“Joe Trommater’s MISTEM connections and efforts have resulted in benefits for Clare, Gladwin and Midland County school districts in several ways Joe led the work with colleagues to create STEM Saturdays in Clare, Gladwin and Midland Counties to increase fun STEM-related learning options for area students and families.”

- Richard VanTol, Out of School Time Network leader and EC administrator, Bay Arenac Intermediate School District

“Rich is a dedicated champion for Early Childhood students and participants in programs through the Out of School Time network in the Great Lakes Bay Region. ... He is a true advocate for high quality stem interactions, supports for families in the GLBR and has greatly influenced the culture of STEM in our region.”

- Gerald Wauldron, teacher, Bullock Creek Middle School

“Gerard Wauldron goes above and beyond to make technology and STEM ideas engaging and accessible to all students. ... He always seems to be involved in some new tech training and brings that knowledge into his classroom and the school as a whole.”

- Amy Weber, teacher, Fancher Elementary School

“Even though she is teaching during a pandemic, Amy continues to offer her students experiences that go above and beyond her regular classroom curriculum. ... Amy invested in STEM virtual field trips with the Center during this academic year, again at a time in which most classroom teachers are not looking for extra experiences for their students.”

- Bethany Wolfgang, STEM/science teacher, Breckenridge Middle School

“She is a dedicated teacher who is looks for ‘cool’ hands-on projects that fit the STEM criteria. ... The students love these projects, you can find them in class and the hallway spreading out to build thier projects.”

- Cory Woodard, teacher, Luce Road Early Childhood Learning Center

“Cory works above and beyond to foster a love for STEM in his classroom and in our building. ... He has a maker space in his classroom and works as our building Technology Specialist to make sure we have the technology and learning to use with our students.”