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SAUK CITY; WIS. – This year the 2020 WAAE State Special Citation Award was presented to Barbara Bielec, who serves as the K-12 Program Director for the Bio- Pharmaceutical Technology Center Institute (BTC Institute) of Fitchburg, Wisconsin. The award was presented at the 2020 WAAE Virtual Professional Development Conference held June 29-July 2, 2020.

The BTC Institute is a nonprofit organization which provides educational opportunities supportive to scientific understanding. Barbara graduated from James Madison Memorial High School in Madison, WI. Her personal interests led her to a Bachelor of Science Degree from UW-Madison in Genetics followed by a Master of Science Degree from Texas A & M University. Her secondary teacher certification reflects her heart is in education as she has acquired certification in Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics. Barbara has accumulated thirty-three years of educating youth of all ages, and adult learners, in a variety of teaching settings.

Barbara joined the BTC Institute in 2001. Barbara's dedicated service has evolved into dynamic outreach programs for Wisconsin Agricultural Educators. Building unique bridges of learning opportunities with a concentrated emphasis on biotechnology has assisted agriscience educators and programs in strengthening various educational components.

Barbara offers her own words of wisdom when she wisely states, "Don't sit at the back-lab bench." Literally, because you don't want to be near the loud equipment, and in life, because this can be conveyed with the recommendation that you need to be willing to put yourself out there. There are moments in life, when doing your best, mistakes are made but then you learn from them. She places value on agricultural education programs because of the hands-on learning tied to exploration & experiential activities that place a high mark on learning with a well-rounded education.

Ms. Bielec's personal philosophy on the mission of educational outreach can be summed up in three words, "Create lifelong learners." Barbara has always demonstrated that through her own educational journey and models it, on a daily basis, visible by students that have walked through the doors of her laboratory classroom.

She holds professional memberships in the National Science Teaching Association, the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers, and the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education.

Reflectively, Barbara easily conveys with a high degree of sincerity, in her own words, "I feel so blessed." In her eyes, it is the accomplishment of raising two kind and fun children that shine brightest in her strong constellation of achievements.

WAAE is the professional association for agricultural educators in Wisconsin. Members include 410 middle school, high school, technical college and university educators. The focus of the association is to provide professional development, legislative support and educational resources for teachers to enhance their local agriculture education programs.

For more information about your local agriculture education program and to find out how you can support agriculture in your community, please contact your local agriculture education instructor or visit www.waae.com.

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