



PRESS RELEASE

Eric Tilleman, Agriculture Education teacher at Cascade Public Schools, has been elected as the 2014 Montana Career and Technical Education Teacher of the Year. The award was presented in Missoula, Montana, on October 17 at the Awards Luncheon during the Annual Montana ACTE Fall Institute.

Eric Tilleman is the Agriculture Teacher at Cascade High School, a large class C school 20 miles southeast of Great Falls. The school district extends from Ulm to Wolf Creek, a 57 mile area and the high school enrollment is 105 students. Of those 105 students, 70 are in one of his agricultural classes. The Cascade FFA program is strong with 67 members and has one of the strongest histories since 1930 in Montana for Career Development Events, Student Leadership Roles and National FFA competitions.

Mr. Tilleman mentors and leads the Cascade FFA program as a large contributor of many different local/community activities for the town of Cascade. The Cascade FFA has been active with PALS, Donkey Basketball, Town Cleanup Day, Great Falls City Easter Egg Hunt, Bike Rodeo, Food for America Program, and State Fair activities. The FFA also does many fundraisers throughout the year including fruit sales, donkey basketball, and the greenhouse.

Mr. Tilleman has been able to elevate the Cascade Ag Department to have 100 percent of the students in a high school Ag class having an SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience) project that is arranged with their parents and business owners. He has also implemented the SAE project as part of the class for most Ag-Ed Classes. Over the years Eric has had success with students and their SAE projects at the state and national levels with just this year having four students receive proficiencies in their areas. Many of Eric's student's SAEs involve fair projects such as beef, sheep or pig projects in which they sell in fair sales. Other student SAE's involved working for local farmers, or working in Great Falls that is 20 miles away. Over the past year the members of the Cascade Ag-Ed were able to earn collectively \$92,677.60 and worked 19,285.5 hours in 2013 with 100 percent of the students filling out the information in record book forms.

One other area Eric has helped Cascade to excel in is the ability to work with the science department and have students conduct science fair projects in an Ag related field such as plant, animal, and technology. Students have been very successful in both areas from Science to Agriculture with their topics of research. In the past five years Cascade has had one student become a finalist for the State Star in Agri-Science and 2 others were the state winner. This year Eric was able to help a 7th grade student working with the Cascade Conservation District and was able to build a science project around soil erosion along the Missouri River which at the state FFA convention she placed first in her division and first in the Regional Science Fair. Over the past 4 years, Eric has been able to work with the National FFA and have received four Living 2 Serve Grants. Each year Eric has had students working with community members and

develop a service project which takes the entire year to complete. One of our major projects was working with Tizer Gardens, the northern most research facility for Denver Botanical Gardens, where students helped to put on workshops on plants to elementary students from the area. Students had to research each of the plants Tizer was growing and then develop a workshop for students.

The Association for Career and Technical Education is the largest national education association dedicated to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for careers. Montana ACTE is a member state with a mission is to provide leadership in developing an educated, prepared, and competitive workforce. The Montana Association of Career and Technical Educators provides the career and technical education necessary to create the highly skilled workforce that supports the demands of the 21st century economy and promotes economic development in Montana's communities.

The Teacher of the Year program is to recognize career and technical educators who have recently provided or currently are providing significant contributions to professional associations and career and technical education programs for youth and/or adults in their fields, communities and/or states. Recipients of this award must have made significant contributions toward innovative, unique and novel programs; and/or improvement, promotion, research or development of programs of career and technical education.

