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Renowned Idaho science teachers earn INDEEDS awards

BOISE, Idaho (Sept. 27, 2016) — The Idaho STEM Action Center is honoring two teachers who champion science, technology, engineering and mathematics while connecting students with industry leaders to mentor projects and provide invaluable career guidance. Caldwell teacher Melyssa Ferro and Boise teacher Sonia Galaviz were named the 2016 winners of the Industry’s Excellent Educators Dedicated to STEM awards, or INDEEDS for short.

The INDEEDS awards recognize teachers who excel at linking STEM education advocates and Gem State businesses with students.

“Melyssa and Sonia are passionate about inspiring the scientists and engineers of tomorrow,” Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter said. “In addition to partnering with businesses and universities to create unique opportunities for students to experience the fun and excitement of science, technology, engineering and math firsthand, they’re teaching kids how to apply those lessons in real-world settings. Efforts like theirs that bring industry and education together are critical to building the workforce Idaho needs.”

Ferro, a science teacher at Syringa Middle School in Caldwell, has taught science to sixth through 10th graders in the district for 16 years. She was named Idaho’s 2016 Teacher of the Year and received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching in 2015.

Galaviz, STEM coordinator at Garfield Elementary in Boise since 2013, has taught in Treasure Valley schools for 12 years. A Boise State Writing Project Fellow, she’s among five teachers nationwide receiving a Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence from the NEA Foundation on February 10, 2017.

The Idaho Technology Council will bestow the INDEEDS awards to Ferro and Galavis at its Idaho Innovation Awards gala October 25 at the Boise Centre. With support from the Discovery Center of Idaho, the STEM Action Center will present both teachers with checks for \$2,000 and give an extra \$2,000 to each of their schools to fund STEM initiatives.

STEM Action Center executive director Angela Hemingway said the commitment of both teachers to their students is unparalleled.

“Melyssa is a tireless STEM advocate who’s especially interested in recruiting girls and minorities into the STEM career pipeline,” she said. “And Sonia considers family involvement in a child’s

education so important she visits the home of every single incoming student before the school year begins.”

Then-Governor Dirk Kempthorne created the INDEEDS awards in 2000 as the STEM Educator of the Year Award. Such industry leaders as the Micron Foundation, Idaho National Laboratory, Hewlett-Packard, LCF Enterprises, Idaho Power, and AECOM sponsored the effort. Governor Otter later incorporated the award presentation into the ITC Idaho Innovation Awards and last year assigned the program to the STEM Action Center, which renamed it INDEEDS to emphasize the important role industry plays in fostering a well-educated workforce.

Economic Modeling Specialists International anticipates robust job growth in STEM careers in Idaho by 2024: 14 percent in computing, 9 percent in engineering, and 23 percent in advanced manufacturing, including 3D printing and design. Meanwhile, the Idaho Department of Labor reported nearly 3,800 STEM jobs went unfilled in 2015. Hemingway said that adds up to more than \$250 million in unrealized personal income and tax revenue since STEM jobs pay a median wage of more than \$32 per hour.

About the Idaho STEM Action Center

The Idaho STEM Action Center is part of the governor’s office and was created by state lawmakers in 2015 to enhance Idaho’s STEM environment by connecting resources, students, educators and businesses. The organization is working with industry, government, educators and students to develop new resources and support high-quality teacher professional-development opportunities to foster a STEM-educated workforce to ensure Idaho’s continued economic prosperity. Visit stem.idaho.gov for more information.

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