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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Leah Garry, Synergy & Leadership Exchange

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Sauk Rapids Educator Named Recipient of $15,000 Award for Excellence

Joshua Bauer, a teacher at Sauk Rapids-Rice High School in Sauk Rapids, was surprised April 26 with the news that he is a recipient of a 2021 WEM Outstanding Educator Award, an honor that is accompanied by a $15,000 award.

Bauer is one of six educators being honored by the WEM Foundation and Synergy & Leadership Exchange for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to student learning. His recognition comes in the Academic Challenge Coach category, which recognizes teachers who are exemplary coaches of student teams that participate and compete in academic challenges approved by the Minnesota Academic League Council.

Bauer is a high school economics and business teacher and a DECA advisor. He has been teaching and coaching for eight years. DECA is a school-to-work student organization that provides marketing-related activities and leadership development. As the school’s lead advisor of DECA, Bauer assisted 32 students to qualify for the National DECA competition last year. Bauer teaches to plant seeds in his students. He strives to share his passion for business, marketing and economics content. It is in these seeds that he feels he can open kids' eyes to career paths where they can find lifetime success and enjoyment.

“Mr. Bauer works incredibly hard to bring as many learning opportunities to his students as possible as well as serve our school in the highest level possible,” said Karl Nohner, Sauk Rapids-Rice High School principal. “He has shown a commitment to creating experiences and content for all classes through building relationships with businesses and organizations throughout our region, as well as engaging with the most up to date content and technology available to ensure that students have opportunities to apply their learning inside and outside of the classroom.”

Bauer is also known as an idea man. He thinks outside of the box and comes up with new ideas for projects and solutions for problems. He then shares these ideas with students and uses them to improve the students’ learning experience. Even in this year of a pandemic and distance learning, Bauer came up with project management ideas such as a Halloween drive-thru, a community event where families could trick or treat from the safety of their vehicle, and a virtual career project, which highlighted various careers through Zoom interviews.

A colleague shared, “Josh develops relationships with every one of his students. He learns what sports they like, their hobbies, where they work and what classes they are taking. He motivates each student to be the best they can be and they feel a special bond with him. He then utilizes this knowledge of his students to match them with experiences that will be meaningful to each student.”

In addition to the Academic Challenge Coach Award, other educators are being honored with the Ethics in Education Award (exemplary educators who embody ethical behavior and promote ethical development for students through classroom or school activities, policies or curriculum), Teacher Achievement Award (exemplary teachers who support, inspire, and assist students to attain greater learning as evidenced by student achievement) and Athletic Coach Award (teachers who are exemplary coaches of athletic teams).

Educators are first nominated for the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards program by students, parents, colleagues or community members. Those who accept the nomination provide additional information for consideration by Synergy & Leadership Exchange and a blue-ribbon selection panel, which reviews and ranks the nominees. In addition to the six statewide honorees, additional educators have been selected as regional honorees for 2021. These names will be announced in May.

Synergy & Leadership Exchange is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering collaboration to advance the development of ethical citizens, providing educational resources, and celebrating achievement and best practices in Minnesota schools, businesses and communities. For more information on the WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program and Synergy & Leadership Exchange, visit: [www.synergyexchange.org](http://www.synergyexchange.org).