



Surfside Middle School Teacher Kathy Jones Recognized By National Science Foundation For Excellence In Mathematics And Science Teaching

April 4, 2013

Jones, with Support from Local Science and Technology Firm SAIC, Leads the School's STEM Program

(Panama City, Fla.) April 4, 2013 – March 14, 2013 was officially named “Kathleen Jones Day” in Panama City Beach, Fla., after the Surfside Middle School teacher received the 2011 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Jones was honored locally after Acting Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), Cora Marrett, presented the award and a corresponding check for \$10,000 to Jones at the White House on June 28, 2012. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was on-hand to deliver remarks and pose with awardees at the ceremony. The PAEMST awards are the nation's highest honors for teachers of K-12 mathematics and science. Jones, an eighth grade teacher, received the national award after leading her school's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) program for four years. The only Florida teacher honored with this award, Jones also had the opportunity to meet Vice President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden during her visit to the White House.

Local science and technology firm Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) has supported Jones and the Surfside STEM program since its inception in 2009. SAIC initiated a supporting relationship with Jones in 2009 when employees began mentoring her *For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST®) LEGO® League (FLL®)* students. Since that time, support for the Surfside FLL program has grown from three SAIC employees to 15. The local SAIC office also adopted FLL programs at two other schools, as well as a program supported by the Science and Discovery Center of Northwest Florida.

In addition to mentoring and assisting with the robotics competitions, several SAIC employees are now volunteering their time as FLL coaches. SAIC supports FLL and Project Lead The Way™ (PLTW®); Jones is directly involved in both programs. In August 2010, SAIC's Chief Technology Officer and STEM lead Amy Alving, Ph.D., visited Surfside to present Jones and a fellow PLTW- certified teacher with on-the-spot awards of \$2,500 each.

Michael Plitman, SAIC Panama City site manager, was present at Jones' local award ceremony, during which she also received the Key to the City. “We're incredibly proud that Kathy was recognized for her commitment to math and science teaching and happy to have played a role in her success,” said Plitman. “She is a phenomenal teacher with a great passion for STEM education, and she's passing on that passion to her students.”

“This achievement was made possible by several outstanding educators and community leaders,” said Jones. “Thank you to the engineers at SAIC who have impacted the lives of many students by supporting our Project Lead the Way – Gateway to Technology program. They have volunteered their time and contributed financially to our pre-engineering program, allowing us to provide a quality program for our students.”

“Surfside and SAIC's relationship has been one of the most awesome affiliations I have ever been involved in,” added Dr. Sue Harrell, Surfside principal. “SAIC is certainly the most committed supporter I've known in thirty years of education,”

The NSF administers PAEMST for the White House Office of Science and Technology. Enacted by Congress in 1983, this program authorizes the President to bestow up to 108 awards each year. This prestigious award recognizes only the most outstanding mathematics and science teachers for their contributions in the classroom and to their profession. More information on the program can be found at <https://www.paemst.org/>.

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