November 12, 2012
For Immediate Release

KCTS 9 ANNOUNCES 2012 GOLDEN APPLE AWARD WINNERS
12 innovative educators and programs across Washington state honored

SEATTLE—KCTS 9 congratulates the winners of the 21st Annual Golden Apple Awards for Excellence in Education, celebrating educators, programs and schools making a positive difference in Washington state education from early childhood through high school. Students, parents, teachers and community members nominated individuals and programs from public and private schools across the state. A panel of education leaders from the community and past Golden Apple Award winners evaluated the nominees and selected this year's winners:

2012 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS - INDIVIDUALS
L. Kathleen Casper, Highly Capable Program, Tacoma Public Schools, Tacoma
Sarah A. James, Cottonwood Elementary, Yakima
Deann Johnson, Washington Elementary School, Mount Vernon
Leslie A. Van Leishout, RiverRidge High School, Lacey
Darren G. McCoy, Oak Harbor High School, Oak Harbor
Stephanie Strow, Fairhaven Middle School, Bellingham
Robert A. Whittemore, Wellington Elementary, Woodinville

2012 GOLDEN APPLE AWARDS - PROGRAMS
Toppenish High School STEM Program, Toppenish
Wenatchee High School Mariachi Program, Wenatchee
Schools to be honored as the 2012 Golden Apple Pathways to Excellence Awards will be announced at a later date. These new awards will recognize schools that are making progress in creating greater educational opportunity by closing the achievement gap.

Golden Apple Award winners will be honored at ceremonies to be held in Seattle in early 2013. Winners will be profiled by KCTS 9 and receive the Golden Apple trophy and a cash prize. The Golden Apple Awards ceremony will air in primetime on public television stations statewide in February 2013. Watch Golden Apple Award winners from the past 20 years.

2012 GOLDEN APPLE AWARD WINNERS

L. Kathleen Casper, Teacher, Highly Capable Program, Tacoma Public Schools, Tacoma
“She brings the world to her classroom, and her students to the world,” says peer instructor Rick Cantrell of Kathleen Casper. Working at three different locations, Kathleen teaches approximately 100 “highly capable” third- through fifth-graders who come from nearly every elementary school in the district. During the 2011–12 school year, Kathleen, who is also a licensed attorney, applied for a fellowship with a civics/leadership program called Institute for a Democratic Future. Bringing her learning back to the classroom, she created a study unit called “Civilizations, Social Justice, and Change” focusing on ancient civilizations and modern issues. Her classes hosted speakers from the community, used Internet and library resources to research issues, and wrote letters to lawmakers suggesting solutions. Students engaged in real-world activities that ranged from speaking to the city council to volunteering at a soup kitchen. In the unit’s culminating project, they created their own model civilizations that reflected their solutions to a variety of social ills. In Kathleen’s classes, students not only have learned about historical and contemporary issues; they’ve discovered first-hand how their actions can make a positive difference.

Sarah A. James, Teacher, Cottonwood Elementary, Yakima
Parents Michael and Abbey Hulett describe Sarah James’ second-grade classroom as “an environment that allows all children to excel.” Sarah, who spent the first 18 years of her career in education as a school psychologist, offers her students a structured and predictable routine, and a caring and accepting atmosphere in which to learn. She welcomes children with special needs, making adjustments so that each child fits in, feels accepted, and learns to his or her full potential. Recognizing the connection between physical fitness and learning, Sarah includes fun exercises between academic activities and encourages her students to participate with her in Cottonwood Elementary’s Mileage Club lunchtime running/walking program. She also works to foster a sense of compassion in her students. “I love seeing kids help each other just because it’s the right thing to do and because it feels good,” she says. In Sarah’s classroom, young learners of all abilities are welcomed into an inclusive community, and given an opportunity to flourish.

Deann Johnson, Artist in Residence, Celebrating Skagit Valley Through Art Program, Washington Elementary School, Mount Vernon
Praised by principal Bill Nutting for her “passion for art and her amazing flair for working with students,” retired teacher Deann Johnson continues to enrich student learning by serving as a substitute teacher and working through the school’s parent group to provide art lessons. During the 2011–12 school year, Deann organized a program called “Celebrating Skagit Valley Through Art.” She taught art lessons in every classroom, and as a final project, each student produced a piece of art with a Skagit Valley theme. The program culminated in April at an evening art celebration at which the students’ creations were displayed gallery-style and sold to their proud parents at an auction that raised funds for parent-group initiatives. Creating their works of art provided the children with opportunities
to practice reasoning, math and problem-solving skills, and their excitement for the project translated into increased enthusiasm for attending class and doing school work. Family attendance at the event was among the highest in school memory. Led by Deann, the program has enabled students to participate in a rich art experience that has allowed them to shine through their work and has encouraged individual talent to flourish.

Leslie A. Van Leishout, Teacher, River Ridge High School, Lacey
“Each and every day, she reminds us students about having passion for the arts. She is the epitome of what every teacher should be,” says student Olivia Maassen of theatre instructor Leslie Van Leishout. Leslie works to help students develop an appreciation for the importance and value of all individuals, using theatre to reach out to a variety of populations and explore social-justice themes. Leslie’s theatre classes provide an emotionally safe environment in which mistakes are treated as learning opportunities and success is measured not in perfection but in growth. The department’s work has included anti-bullying performances for elementary-school students, matinees of Romeo and Juliet for ninth-grade English classes, and World AIDS Day performances about HIV/AIDS. For a school assembly on the dangers of drinking and driving, Leslie’s students crafted a powerful message, working with emergency personnel to stage a mock drunk-driving crash. Each year, StudentWorks, a collection of student-created plays and dances, gives students an authentic way to explore the global community in which they live. Year after year, Leslie’s classes impact students in a way that will last a lifetime.

Darren G. McCoy, Choir Director, Oak Harbor High School, Oak Harbor
“Mr. McCoy has developed an all-inclusive music program that will touch the lives of young people well into their adult years,” says colleague Patricia McCutcheon. Darren McCoy has taught choir at Oak Harbor High for the past four years. During that time, he has enriched the choir program in many ways, from creating a Show Choir that allows students to combine their interests in choir, drama and dancing, to teaching students about music composition. The program welcomes all interested students and provides them with a supportive environment for exploring their artistic potential, along with a varied repertoire; over the school year, students experience music from a variety of cultures and perform in four to five languages. The program reaches beyond school walls, providing students with many opportunities to perform in the community. Under Darren’s leadership, the number of students participating in choir has grown dramatically. At concerts, seats are filled to capacity. Darren’s classes provide students with exceptional experiences that nurture not only musical talent but self-confidence and self-esteem.

Stephanie Strow, Teacher, Fairhaven Middle School, Bellingham
“Can you imagine how different our world might be if empathy was a skill that had to be mastered before one could graduate from middle school?” asks Stephanie Strow. In Stephanie’s social studies class, seventh-graders engage in a transformative learning experience, building not only strong academic skills but global awareness and compassion for others. Inspired by her students’ moving response to the events of 9/11, Stephanie created the Social Action Project, which all Fairhaven Middle School seventh-graders have completed since 2004. Each school year, Stephanie introduces her students to a variety of important social issues. Students discuss, write about and research the issues, then select one problem on which to focus their learning and actions. Their efforts culminate in a formal presentation to their classmates in which they share the work they have done on behalf of others. Working on issues close to their hearts, students become engaged, enthusiastic learners, and they continue to be involved with social awareness long after leaving Stephanie’s classroom.
Robert A. Whittemore, Teacher, Sixth Grade PACE Program, Wellington Elementary, Woodinville

“I consider him to be one of the most influential teachers I’ve ever had,” says recent Yale graduate Graham Banfield of his former teacher Bob Whittemore. A founding member of Wellington’s popular PACE program, Bob strives to create enthusiasm for learning and to help his students expand their view of themselves and the world. He sets high standards and motivates students to do their best by letting them know he believes in their capabilities. As a result, many not only meet, but exceed, school district expectations. Bob engages his students with multi-level projects such as “Liquid Toxic Goop” and “Voyage of Discovery” that combine math, science, social studies, art and writing. In Bob’s class, students write book reports, original stories and poetry, and they experience an enriched math curriculum that lays a solid foundation for future math learning. Through his passion for learning and teaching and his innovative application of curriculum, Bob provides his students with a launch pad for success in middle school and beyond, helping every child discover that he or she is capable of great things.

Toppenish High School STEM Program, Toppenish

In Toppenish High School’s comprehensive STEM program, students are regularly exposed to learning experiences that help build important skills and an understanding of how the world works. The program’s engineering and biomedical sciences courses are characterized by a unique atmosphere in which students are excited and engaged in their learning. Students take part in rigorous, hands-on activities, utilize modern technology, and hone their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. To further link the classroom to the real world, STEM teachers often create community-based activities in which students work in teams to solve actual problems. In order to expand student access to resources, expertise and apprenticeship opportunities, the program has formed partnerships with businesses and institutions of higher learning. Since implementing its engineering and biomedical courses, the school has seen increased enrollment in physics, chemistry and higher-level math classes, as well as significant growth in state science assessment scores. Toppenish High School’s STEM program is making important contributions to students’ success both in the classroom and in the world beyond school.

Wenatchee High School Mariachi Program, Wenatchee

“A group that is setting a positive course, accomplishing a lot, and getting good community recognition” is how volunteer Marcy Horne describes the WHS mariachi program led by music teacher Ramon Rivera. Offered free of charge, the award-winning program allows students to enjoy an engaging musical activity without the financial burden many other school activities can impose. Participation provides many students with a connection to their heritage, while for others, mariachi is an adventure into a culture they want to get to know. Under Ramon’s direction, the mariachi program has presented performances at a wide variety of venues throughout the state. Ramon’s students find doors opening and their horizons broadening as they perform in settings that range from universities to senior centers, from Seahawks games to the Capitol Rotunda. The students’ performance successes lead to improved self-esteem and an increased enthusiasm for learning. Ramon has developed a music program that welcomes students of all backgrounds and gives them tools to help them become successful members of the community.

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About the Golden Apple Awards

The Golden Apple Awards recognize and honor examples of exceptional teaching and educational innovation in Washington State. Since the first Golden Apple Awards in 1992, KCTS 9 has received nominations citing the achievements of more than 3,000 individuals and programs across Washington, leading to the selection of more than 200 outstanding educators and programs. More than 500 people
attended a ceremony at Seattle's Intiman Theater to honor last year's winners, who came from Burien, Mercer Island, Okanogan, Oroville, Seattle, Sequim, Snohomish, Tacoma and Wenatchee.

The Golden Apple Awards are sponsored by KCTS 9 and funded by the PEMCO Foundation and the School Employees Credit Union of Washington. Special funding for the 2012 Golden Apple Pathways to Excellence Awards comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

**About KCTS 9**

KCTS 9 brings quality public television programming to 2.6 million viewers each week in Western and Central Washington State, British Columbia and across Canada. To watch or learn more about any of our programs, visit [KCTS9.org](http://www.KCTS9.org).

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