USU Extension's Terry Messmer Honored with Governor's Medal

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01/06/2017

Utah State University Extension Wildlife Specialist Terry Messmer is among the 2017 recipients of the Governor's Medal for Excellence in Science and Technology. Also recognized this year from USU are Professors John Morrey and Debra Spielmaker.

The honor is awarded annually to selected residents and companies that have provided distinguished service or made significant contributions to Utah's advanced scientific and technological knowledge, education and industry.

“The medal recipients are true leaders in innovation, serving as educators, mentors and influencers statewide,” Gov. Gary Herbert said. “I commend the winners for excellence in their fields and for their important work, which will benefit Utah residents for generations.”

USU President Noelle Cockett said, “I am very pleased to congratulate these members of our faculty for their outstanding work and achievements. The diversity of disciplines they represent illustrates the excellence we find throughout the university. Also, these individuals showcase USU’s commitment to helping people in Utah and beyond through our land grant mission of discovery, learning and outreach.”

Terry Messmer has accomplished much during his 25-year career at USU, including the creation of an award-winning conservation program. The USU Extension wildlife specialist and professor in the Department of Wildland Resources, directs the Utah Community-Based Conservation Program (CBCP), which, working in concert with state and federal partners, has restored more than 500,000 acres of sage-grouse habitat and protected more than 94 percent of the state's sage-grouse populations on 7.5 million acres. The CBCP was recently honored by The Wildlife Society for its contributions to local, state, regional, national and international conservation.

In addition, Messmer was recently honored with two national awards from different organizations recognizing the conservation impacts of the CBCP and his applied research programs. Both awards recognize his leadership and communication abilities and the conservation impacts of his integrated research and Extension programs.

Messmer is noted for his diverse abilities and his passion for the land, stewardship, wildlife and helping those most affected by conservation policies. Whether mentoring graduate students, riding an ATV in the dark to capture sage-grouse, coordinating with the governor’s office or working with federal agencies in Washington, D.C., he is motivated by a deep concern for natural resources and the people who depend on them.

John Morrey
John Morrey has built a career understanding and fighting viruses that cause devastating diseases. He is a research professor in USU’s Department of Animal, Dairy and Veterinary Sciences and director of the university’s Institute for Antiviral Research, which marked a milestone last year of having acquired more than $107 million in research funding since the institute’s founding in 1977. The institute’s core of faculty scientists, technicians and student researchers have used this funding to study viruses, including Zika, West Nile, hantavirus, avian influenza, swine flu, SARS, yellow fever, dengue and others. They also test possible treatments and vaccines that are important in treating diseases worldwide.

Morrey’s own research of the past several years has focused on West Nile virus. With funding from the National Institutes of Health, Morrey and his team have made important discoveries about neurological disease caused by West Nile virus. His work has led to world-recognized advances in understanding and treating viral diseases of the brain and liver. His productive career has resulted in 132 peer-reviewed publications, primarily in the areas of virology, neurology, immunology, and therapeutics. In addition, instructional videos on recombinant DNA laboratory techniques produced by Morrey’s private venture have been used by scientists worldwide.

Debra Spielmaker

Debra Spielmaker has been an educator for more than 30 years, starting as a high school and middle school agricultural science teacher. She directed the Utah Agriculture in the Classroom program with USU Extension for 18 years, and provided professional development to over 15,000 K-12 practicing and pre-service teachers. She developed a comprehensive, dynamic and nationally recognized Agriculture in the Classroom program. Resources she developed for the Utah K-12 science core curriculum standards use agriculture as a context for learning science related to weather, soil, water, land use, microorganisms, genetics, sustainability, environmental science, and plant and animal science. She is currently director of USDA’s National Agriculture in the Classroom program and also a professor teaching and conducting research with practicing teachers enrolled in graduate programs in USU’s School of Applied Sciences, Technology and Education.

Spielmaker has been project director for the USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s (NIFA) Agricultural Literacy program since 2012 and is responsible for all national electronic resources, the Agriculture in the Classroom National Agricultural Curriculum Matrix, professional development, and agricultural literacy research. In 2015, she completed work on the new Utah seventh grade required course, College and Career Awareness. She was responsible for the development of project-based learning instruction integrating STEM and careers as well as teacher professional development.

Read more about these outstanding faculty members and their work:

Terry Messmer
USU Extension Wildlife Specialist Recognized Nationally
USU Extension Conservation Program Earns Achievement Award
John Morrey
Going Antiviral
Emerging Worldwide Infectious Diseases: Opportunities and Prospects
Debra Spielmaker
Why Care About Agriculture? It's All About Quality of Life
Stuff You Should Know

See the announcement from the Governor’s Office here.

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