

USU Extension Faculty Member Receives Governor's Medal for Excellence

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Utah State University Extension Assistant Professor Paul Hill was named a recipient of the 2015 Governor's Medals for Excellence in Science and Technology. The awards are given to companies and residents who have provided distinguished service or made significant contributions to Utah's advanced scientific and technological knowledge, education and industry. Utah Governor Gary Herbert, along with the Utah Science Technology and Research agency and the Governor's Office for Economic Development announced the winners Dec. 15.

Hill is one of four USU faculty members honored. Also receiving awards are Noelle Cockett, USU's executive vice president and provost; Michelle Baker, professor of biology and project director of iUTAH; and Christine Hailey, dean of the College of Engineering and a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering. The last time

four faculty members from USU received Governor's Medals was in 1988.

Hill was named USU Extension 4-H faculty in Washington County in 2011 and immediately launched several programs that have rapidly spread to reach thousands of youth. He brought the FIRST® LEGO® League robotics program to southern Utah, expanding it to 53 teams with more than 500 youth participants and 224 adult volunteers. He and a team of volunteers also started Code Camp, a programming competition where students and professionals come together in teams to launch an app in 24 hours. Four years later, this event has cultivated a tech community by bringing together nearly 600 participants in 156 teams that have produced video games, tools, mobile and web app projects. In addition, Hill has organized 4-H Maker Camps for several years, with \$50,000 in grant funding awarded from Cognizant, a Fortune 500 global tech company.

Ken White, USU Extension vice president, said out of many nominees, only a select few are chosen to receive the prestigious governor's award, and Paul is truly a deserving recipient.

"I have watched him bring many innovative programs to USU Extension in Washington County, and he is nationally recognized for his expertise in STEM education," he said. "In four years, 1,487 STEM projects have been completed in Paul's 4-H program. Youth are changing their attitudes toward STEM because he is so gifted in developing programs that make these subjects appealing."

Hill said he is honored to receive the award.

"It really takes a community of leaders who share a vision for a future STEM workforce," he said. "Fortunately, I have been able to connect with amazing people who share this vision and work diligently to make events like FIRST LEGO League and Code Camp happen for young people in Washington County. Ongoing STEM experiences are what give youth the confidence to continue doing hard things. I can't physically provide all these experiences, and that's why I'm so grateful for 4-H volunteer leaders who step up and start clubs, host summer camps and mentor youth one-on-one. Utah has a bright future."

Award recipients will be honored at a gala on Jan. 13. The governor has awarded the medals since 1987.

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