

Montana State University Extension Pesticide Education Program Recognizes Two Trainers for Statewide Impacts

Cecil Tharp (MSU Pesticide Education Specialist)

The Montana State University (MSU) Pesticide Education Program (PEP) recognizes two individuals for exceptional efforts that benefit farm applicators across Montana. The MSU PEP offers guidance to pesticide applicators across the state; while coordinating the certification and training of approximately 5,700 certified farm (private) applicators across Montana. The program delivered a lifetime achievement award to Shelley Mills, Valley County Extension Agricultural / 4-H Agent; and an early achievement award to Mat Walter, Musselshell / Golden Valley County Extension Agricultural / 4-H Agent. These recognitions were awarded for the first time in PEP history on April 21st, 2017 at the annual MSU PEP Update for pesticide trainers.

The early achievement award from MSU PEP is awarded to an individual demonstrating exceptional efforts and impacts in pesticide education over their first five years with MSU Extension. Mat Walter was hired as an MSU Extension Agricultural / 4-H Agent in late 2015. Since his hire Mat has developed presentations on tank mixing and formulations that are used by other pesticide trainers, delivered presentations at multiple train the trainer programs; and assisted many other pesticide trainers in delivering local pesticide programs. It is exceptional for new MSU Extension agents to take this role due to the many facets of their position that often are overlooked. Mat was previously employed as a crew foreman and Education Specialist for the Yellowstone Weed District, prior to 10 years working at the Southern Agriculture Research Center in Huntley, Montana.



The MSU PEP lifetime achievement award was delivered to an individual demonstrating exceptional efforts resulting in statewide pesticide education impacts over a minimum of 15 years. Nominees may carry forward experience within or outside of MSU Extension to qualify for this award. Shelley Mills was hired as an MSU Extension Agricultural / 4-H Agent for Valley County in 2010. Since her hire Shelley was appointed to the MSU PEP advisory panel where many of her ideas have led to improvements in the



educational program; while also developing many presentations over a wide array of subjects that are used by other trainers. Finally, Shelley's involvement as a leader / speaker at train the trainer programs over the years is invaluable to Montana's private applicator trainers. Shelley's beneficial impacts toward Montana pesticide applicators pre-date her employment at MSU. Shelley previously worked with the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) for 23 years as the Agricultural Specialist where she focused on pesticide regulation, investigation, while offering education whenever the opportunity

arose. According to Shelley, “My philosophy as a regulatory agent was that I would rather educate than incarcerate.” While working with the MDA Shelley instructed many Environmental Protection Agency, tribal, and state regulatory agents in proper investigative techniques, sampling protocols, as well as herbicide injury diagnosis and recognition.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: For more information on the MSU Pesticide Education Program navigate to www.pesticides.montana.edu or future pesticide education nominations may be sent to Cecil Tharp, Pesticide Education Specialist (406-994-5067; ctharp@montana.edu).