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## Two Teachers Win Seagate Science Mentor Awards

Two Minnesota science teachers have been chosen to receive Seagate Science Mentor Awards, a statewide recognition for educators who have mentored student participants in the regional science fairs across Minnesota. The awards were presented at the Minnesota State Science and Engineering Fair awards ceremony, March 30 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul. Receiving the Seagate Science Mentor Awards for 2009 are **Sonja Dunlap** from Murray Junior High School in St. Paul and **Lois Fruen** from Breck School in Golden Valley.

Seagate Science Mentor Awards recognize junior and senior high school science teachers who have found creative ways to nurture students' interest in scientific inquiry and promote science education in their schools. The award criteria specifically considers the nominees' support of students' hands-on projects and experiences outside the classroom that generate interest in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). There are two award categories – one for a teacher with 1 to 10 years of experience, and another for a teacher with 11 or more years of experience.

“The Seagate Science Mentor Awards are very significant, because the teachers are nominated by their students, parents and school staff,” said Lise Weegman, director of the State Science and Engineering Fair, Minnesota Academy of Science. “These educators have gained the respect of their students and peers and have made exceptional contributions in promoting science and influencing students to consider STEM-related careers.”

Receiving the award for teachers with 1 to 10 years of experience is Sonja Dunlap, who is a science teacher at Murray Junior High School in St. Paul. Dunlap was nominated because of her ability to provide a learning environment that excites and inspires her students to take on challenging science fair projects and work to their full potential. According to her students, when obstacles arise as they prepare their science fair projects, Dunlap is there to help them overcome those hurdles. She builds the student, teacher, parent team and brings out the best in her students by understanding and adapting to their learning styles. Many of Dunlap's students have continued their participation in the Twin Cities Regional Science Fair and State Science and Engineering Fair during their senior high years. She has mentored them, along with her junior high students, going above and beyond expectations year after year.

“Mrs. Dunlap's teaching helped me fall in love with science,” said Chee Xiong, now a senior at Como Park Senior High in St. Paul, who helped nominate Dunlap for the award. Xiong participated in both the Minnesota State Science and Engineering Fair and the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the world's largest international pre-college science competition, in Reno, NV, May 10-15, 2009.

*Continued....*

**Seagate Science Mentors Continued**

Lois Fruen, science teacher and science department chair at Breck School in Golden Valley, will receive the Seagate Science Mentor award for teachers who have 11 or more years of experience. During her more than 30-year teaching career at Breck School, Fruen has guided the development and implementation of a research-based science curriculum. This approach has been used to build community throughout the entire school by having students at different grade levels complete scientific research together. Ms. Fruen is a MAS board member.

"Mrs. Fruen is, without a doubt, the most influential teacher I have had in my life," said Stephen Trusheim, a Breck School senior who is one of 40 finalists in the national Intel Science Talent Search competition and a participant in the Minnesota State Science and Engineering Fair. "She has inspired me to move beyond classroom science, and she has given me the motivation to excel as both a scientist and individual." Like Xiong, Trusheim also participated in ISEF in May.

"It is a privilege to recognize these outstanding teachers for their commitment to generating student interest in hands-on science," said Bob Whitmore, chief technical officer at Seagate. "They have proven track records of nurturing scientific inquiry through mentoring students, promoting creativity, and reinforcing the practical application of skills."

Award winners receive a plaque and \$1,000, and their respective schools also receive a plaque and \$1,000 for their science programs.

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