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Eight in the Running for 2017 Virginia Teacher of the Year *Commonwealth's Top Teacher will be Announced Next Month in Richmond*

Eight teachers today learned of their selection as 2017 Virginia Regional Teachers of the Year during surprise classroom visits, school assemblies and announcements by their division superintendents — and in the case of a Spotsylvania County Spanish teacher — Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples.

“Today we recognize eight teachers in Virginia who exhibit integrity in their profession and inspire their students to high achievement,” Staples said after announcing the selection of Freedom Middle Spanish teacher Carolyn Kleinert as the 2017 Region 3 Teacher of the Year. “These educators are recognized as leaders in their field, setting examples academically and personally among their peers and within their classrooms.”

The other seven 2017 Regional Teachers of the Year announced are as follows:

- Louise Thornton, a government teacher at Prince George High in Prince George County (Region 1)
- Toney McNair Jr., a music teacher at Indian River Middle in Chesapeake (Region 2)
- Heidi Trude, a French teacher at Skyline High in Warren County (Region 4)
- Crystal DeLong, a social studies teacher at Liberty High in Bedford County (Region 5)
- Jason Ince, an agricultural education teacher at Chatham High in Pittsylvania County (Region 6)
- Beth Shell, an agricultural education teacher at Lee County Career and Technical Center in Lee County (Region 7)
- Katie McCann, a language arts and reading teacher at Appomattox Elementary in Appomattox County (Region 8)

The teachers were selected from among candidates nominated by school divisions in each of the state's eight superintendents' regions. The candidates submitted portfolios highlighting their accomplishments, educational philosophies and community activities.

A panel, including classroom teachers, representatives of professional and educational associations, the business community and 2016 Virginia Teacher of the Year Natalie DiFusco-Funk of West Salem Elementary in Salem reviewed the portfolios and selected the eight regional teachers of the year. Next month, the same panel will interview each of the eight regional teachers to select the 2017 Virginia Teacher of the Year. The decision will be announced on October 17 during a ceremony at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond.

The 2017 Virginia Teacher of the Year will be the commonwealth's nominee in the National Teacher of the Year Program. The recognition is given by the Council of Chief State School Officers, in partnership with the Voya Financial. Two previous Virginia teachers — B. Philip Bigler, the 1998 Virginia Teacher of the Year, and Mary V. Bicouvaris, the 1989 Virginia Teacher of the Year — went on to be named as a National Teacher of the Year.

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