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Union Elementary School Teacher Named 2016 Vermont Teacher of the Year

Montpelier, VT – Susan Koch, a Union Elementary School Kindergarten and First Grade teacher, has been selected as the 2016 Vermont Teacher of the Year (VT-TOY), the Agency of Education announced today.

In addition to teaching first grade, she has encouraged and developed the Educating Children Outdoors (ECO) Program in Montpelier. This outdoor education program has now spread to all of the grades at Union Elementary. All students are given the opportunity to learn in a natural setting throughout the entire school year.

Also recognized are:

- Alternate **Anne Marie Mahar**, a science and biology teacher for grades 11-12 at Rutland High School; and
- Finalist **Stephen Rand**, an English teacher at Harwood Union Middle and High School for grades 9-12.

Koch, Mahar and Rand will be honored by the State Board of Education at an event **November 17**. Rebecca Haslam of Champlain Elementary School is the current 2015 Vermont Teacher of the Year. Koch's tenure as 2016 Vermont Teacher of the Year will begin January 1.

As the 2016 Teacher of the Year, Koch will travel statewide visiting schools and working with teachers. In addition, she is Vermont's candidate for the National Teacher of the Year award, sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers. Koch will travel to Washington, D.C. this spring for a reception at the White House, where she will meet the President.

"I am proud to represent all of the incredible teachers and colleagues I have met, studied with, collaborated with, and admired," said Koch. "Education today is a vibrant exciting profession. The role of a teacher in a child's education has fundamentally changed. We are no longer lecturing student's as they sit in a "one size fits all classroom". Educators are providing unique learning opportunities for students that often include forest lessons, community visits, virtual field trips, and collaborative teaching. Students are creating their own knowledge, learning actively, setting goals, and reflecting upon their learning. The teaching profession is a dynamic and exciting field."

Since 1964, Vermont has participated in this program recognizing outstanding teachers. For more information about the Vermont Teacher of the Year program, go to:

<http://education.vermont.gov/department/awards/teacher-of-the-year>.

For more information about the program and Vermont's selection, contact Rebecca Plude at (802) 479-1718.

Connect with the Vermont Agency of Education on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/VTEducation>), Facebook (www.facebook.com/VTEducation), and YouTube (www.youtube.com/VTEducation).

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