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Contact:
Carolyn Phenicie
Carolyn.Phenicie@ccsso.org

Oklahoma Math Teacher Named 2023 National Teacher of the Year

Washington, D.C. (April 19, 2023) – The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) today announced that Rebecka Peterson, a high school math teacher, is the 2023 National Teacher of the Year.

Peterson has taught high school math classes ranging from intermediate algebra to Advanced Placement calculus for 11 years at Union High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. A proud immigrant of Swedish-Iranian descent, Peterson is passionate about making mathematics engaging, relevant and accessible to all students, no matter their background.

Amid a difficult first year of high school teaching, she found “[One Good Thing](#),” a collaborative blog for teachers to track the good things happening in their classrooms. She credits daily posting there to helping her recognize the beautiful and positive experiences occurring in her classroom, which inspired her to stay in the profession. She has since contributed 1,400 posts to the blog. As Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, she has visited teachers across the state to highlight their important work through the [Teachers of Oklahoma](#) campaign.

As the 2023 National Teacher of the Year, Peterson will spend a year representing educators and serving as an ambassador for students and teachers across the nation. She plans to spend her year elevating teachers’ stories of the good happening in the classroom, in hope of both encouraging current teachers and attracting new educators to the profession. She believes that when we take the time to learn each other’s stories, we are more open to searching for the places where our values intersect.

“Everyone has a powerful story to share – listening to the stories of my students, and those of my fellow educators across Oklahoma, has helped me grow personally and professionally,” Peterson said. “I believe that listening to one story after another has an exponential positive impact. It is an honor to be able to share the stories of our country’s brilliant students and dedicated educators as the next National Teacher of the Year.”

CCSSO's National Teacher of the Year Program identifies exceptional teachers across the country, recognizes their effective work in the classroom, engages them in a year of professional learning and amplifies their voices.

"Despite the challenges of the past few years, joyful, innovative learning is taking place in classrooms across the country every day. I look forward to the new ways Rebecka will help shine a light on the stories of good things happening in our schools," said CCSSO Chief Executive Officer Carissa Moffat Miller. "I am proud CCSSO has had the privilege to support excellent teachers like Rebecka through the National Teacher of the Year Program for more than 70 years."

Every year, exemplary teachers from each state, U.S. extra-state territories, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity are selected as State Teachers of the Year. From that group, the National Teacher of the Year is chosen by a selection committee composed of [17 individuals and education organizations](#).

The Selection Committee said in a statement: "Rebecka is a caring and passionate educator who understands the importance of connections and providing individual supports for students, both in her math classes and beyond. She has a deep knowledge of both education policy and teaching practices and understands that sustained change at a small scale can make a big difference for students. We know people across the country will connect with the stories she shares as the 2023 National Teacher of the Year."

"Rebecka Peterson has inspired our children in the classroom — but we all know that her work is not done yet, and she will inspire millions of others in her very young but distinct career. Rebecka has changed the lives of countless students; she impacts all those around her and makes everyone better. She finds potential not only in our children, but in our teachers as well," Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters said. "She represents Oklahoma's future and reassures us all that the future is bright. I wholeheartedly support Rebecka for Teacher of the Year, and on behalf of all of Oklahoma, we are proud to call her our own."

The National Teacher of the Year Program is sponsored by Google for Education, Equitable, Pearson, Cambium Assessment, Cognia, Curriculum Associates, Data Recognition Corporation, ETS, GoGuardian, MetaMetrics, NWEA, Smarter Balanced and Voya.

The finalists for the 2023 National Teacher of the Year are Harlee Harvey (Alaska), Carolyn Kielma (Connecticut), Jermar Rountree (District of Columbia) and Kimberly Radostits (Illinois.) You can read more about the finalists [here](#).

Learn more about Rebecka Peterson, including her biography and photos, at www.ntoy.org.

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The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, Bureau of Indian Education, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.