

Blissfield Community Schools is proud to announce that Blissfield Elementary School fifth grade teacher, Gary Koppelman, has been selected by The NSTA Shell Science Teaching Award Judging Panel as the recipient of the 2013 National Shell Science Teacher Award. After reviewing many applications, watching videos of candidates teaching and interacting with their students, and going on site visits to spend a day with the top three finalists, Mr. Koppelman was chosen by the judging panel as their award winner. Through a partnership between Shell Oil Company and the National Science Teachers Association, the award was established to recognize outstanding classroom teachers who have had a positive impact on students, their school and their community. Its focus is on exemplary science teaching.

As the Shell Science Teaching Award winner, Mr. Koppelman will be attending the National Science Teacher's Association Conference in San Antonio, Texas from April 11 - 14, 2013. At that time he will be recognized during the Teacher Awards Gala. The following tribute to him was written by the judging panel and will be read at the time he receives his award.

"Throughout his 40 years in the elementary classroom, Mr. Koppelman's students consistently rank among the highest in the county "as a direct result of the outstanding 'hands-on, minds-on' science instruction they receive," says his district's superintendent, Scott Moellenberndt. "Furthermore, the leadership and vision Gary demonstrated while spearheading the development of the Blissfield Educational Life Laboratory (BELL) in 1998 continues to provide unique K-12 science learning experiences for students district-wide and serves as a wonderful source of pride for our community." The BELL, an arboretum and terrarium furnished with a freshwater stream/pond, butterfly house, saltwater ecosystem, bird aviary, herpetile area, and invertebrate zoo, provides habitats, biomes,

and ecosystems for observation and experimentation. It gives the entire community an extended classroom to study throughout the year. "Students throughout the school system have benefited through their experiences with our Life Lab, and our state standardized science test scores (97% proficient at the elementary level) prove just that," notes the district's science curriculum committee facilitator, Mark Willson. Koppelman has received numerous honors during his career, including the Northwest Ohio Environmental SAVE Teacher Award, a Michigan Special Tribute Teacher Award, a Great Lakes Ethanol Environmental Teacher Award, and designation as Lenawee County Teacher of the Year. In addition, he secured a \$30,000 alternative energy grant that funded the installation of a solar panel and wind generator to help power the BELL Lab.

Many of Koppelman's former students credit his positive influence in their becoming industry leaders and educators in the fields of animal science, biology, chemistry, and physics. Dee Crane, Principal at Blissfield Elementary School states, "Gary's influence reaches far beyond the science classroom. His passion for teaching and learning, his commitment to students, and his daily example of what it means to be a caring and compassionate human being make a difference in the lives of our students everyday."