

High School Chemistry's Leading Lady

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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The precollege section of *JCE* has begun video recording interviews of ACS James Bryant Conant Awardees. Kathy Kitzmann of Michigan is the first awardee to be interviewed in this way.

KEYWORDS: General Public, High School/Introductory Chemistry, Public Understanding/Outreach, Professional Development, Conferences

FEATURE: Award Address

■ VIDEO RECORDING AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ACS JAMES BRYANT CONANT AWARD 2014 WINNER

Kathy Kitzmann is in her 41st year of teaching in my home state of Michigan. I have known of Kitzmann for many years because she is a well-known presenter and mentor in Michigan chemistry teacher circles. Ironically, it took a trip to Dallas, Texas, this past March for me to get to know her on a more personal level. She was attending the American Chemical Society (ACS) meeting in Dallas to accept the 2014 James Bryant Conant Award. The Conant Award was established in 1965. Different entities have sponsored the award over the past 49 years. The award is intended to acknowledge high-quality teaching, ability to challenge and inspire, extracurricular work, and continuing education. Find out more about the James Bryant Conant Award from the ACS Web site.¹

The precollege section appreciates the value of the Conant Award and realizes the importance of recognizing the awardees. In hopes of bringing more attention to the award, *Journal* staff began interviewing Conant Award winners in 2000² and continued to publish these interviews annually in *JCE* through 2012.³ The precollege section unveiled the *JCE* Chemical Education Xchange (ChemEd X) in 2012⁴ and has transitioned to sharing similar interviews, beginning with Stephen Radice,⁵ there. You can also find a list⁶ of past Conant Award winners and links to related articles on the ChemEd X Web site.⁷

Video has become a popular platform for sharing information. It can be a more personable alternative to a print interview, and it allows for sharing information more passively. The reader/viewer can watch the video while doing other things even when they do not have the time to read the written word. Given the venue and availability of an ACS camera crew, the ACS meeting in Dallas provided a perfect opportunity to record a video interview with Kitzmann.

■ A "TRAILER" FOR THE KATHY KITZMANN VIDEO

Like many of us, Kitzmann did not take a straight path to teaching. She had an interest in chemistry in high school, but initially considered pursuing a medical degree. She switched gears while completing her undergraduate degree at Taylor University and earned her teaching degree. Still unsure of her path, she ended up going to University of Michigan to earn a

Masters in Medicinal Chemistry and tried working in a laboratory before she finally decided to begin her teaching career in 1974. Most of Kitzmann's career has been spent teaching at a private school for girls, Mercy High School, in Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Kathy enjoys showing off her collection of chemistry-themed jewelry and wardrobe. She wears Mickey Mouse earrings when discussing the shape of water, rainbow colored earrings when introducing the electromagnetic spectrum, and ruler earrings when teaching significant digits. She dresses for the topic of the day even if it is just to wear a particular color, like her fuchsia sweater, when demonstrating how phenolphthalein turns pink in a base. She also likes to have her students join her in singing silly chemistry songs. Many things besides her wardrobe and song portfolio have changed in the past 40 years. Textbooks, teaching methods, technology, academic standards, and expectations of students and their parents are some of those things. Kathy has modified her approach to laboratories and her approach to teaching many times as she has stayed abreast of advances in pedagogy and teaching strategies through her involvement with ACS and her Michigan cohorts. She uses best practices, inspires her students, and demonstrates leadership while exhibiting a genuine passion for chemistry and teaching. Most recently, she has embedded more inquiry practices in all aspects of her teaching. Some of Kitzmann's original activities have been sold as kits through Flinn Scientific.⁸ One thing that has been consistent is that she has tried to make her chemistry course entertaining and help students find connections between the course content and their world.

Kathy credits her freshman chemistry teacher at Taylor University, Stanley Burden, as well as colleagues and chemistry teacher friends around the country with her success. She advises other chemistry teachers to attend conferences, including ACS meetings, BCCE, and ChemEd in order to network and share best practices. She emphasizes that sharing with other teachers is one of the most valuable and rewarding parts of the job.

Kitzmann coauthored *Chemistry in the National Science Education Standards* in 1996.¹⁰ In 1997, she was recognized as the American Chemical Society Central Region High School

Teacher of the Year. She has served on the Michigan Science Teacher Association Board and chaired their conference in 2002. She has also been an organizer of the Metro Detroit Science Fair at Cobo Hall for many years. A highlight of Kitmann's attendance at the BCCE is that she has been part of the musical group called Al D. Hyde and the Key Tones, which first performed in 2004 in Iowa.⁹ More than 20 musicians, mostly chemistry teachers and professors, meet at BCCE every two years and perform for the conference attendees. Kathy's love of the arts is apparent in the context of her career, so it is not a surprise that she is an active participant in her local performing arts. There could not be a more fitting chemistry leading lady to star in our first *JCE* video interview of Conant Awardees.

■ ABOUT THE CONANT AWARD

The 2014 Conant Award was sponsored by Thermo Fisher Scientific, Inc.,¹¹ which has been sponsoring the award since 2007. Kitmann received a \$5000 award and a framed certificate and was reimbursed for travel expenses to the Dallas ACS conference to receive the award.¹

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

§ Supporting Information

A short video in which *JCE* associate editor, Deanna Cullen, interviews the 2014 Conant Award winner, Kathy Kitmann. This material is available via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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