

MELHS Science Teacher Selected For CDC Fellowship Program

by Angela Mueller
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EDWARDSVILLE – Deb Wudtke, biology and life science teacher at Metro-East Lutheran High School, has been selected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for its Science Ambassador Fellowship.

This fellowship is the only program of its kind offered by the CDC for STEM teachers interested in bringing public health sciences into their classrooms. The competitive program includes a 5-day summer course at the CDC's headquarters in Atlanta and a 1-year distance-based professional development opportunity.

Wudtke said she has long been interested in the topic of public health and its impact on day-to-day life, but especially now coming out of the pandemic.

“Students need to have more of a basic understanding of what public health is all about now,” she said. “They are bombarded by the media with information about it. They are affected by it. They need to be educated about it.”

Through the fellowship, Wudtke will collaborate with CDC experts to develop STEM lesson plans and be an ambassador to other science educators about how to best teach public health.

Wudtke, who has a master's degree in biology for the biology teacher from Washington University, studied immunology and environmental medicine while at Wash U.

“It was fascinating to understand the bigger picture of public health and what impacts it,” she said.

In addition to biology and advanced biology, Wudtke also teaches anatomy and physiology, microbiology and DNA, and forensic science at MELHS. She will complete an online public health course before she travels to Atlanta this summer for the 5-day intensive course at the CDC's headquarters. She will then spend the following year working with a cohort of science teachers to develop new materials to teach public health issues across multiple grade levels.

The CDC fellowship is just one continuing education program for which Wudtke has been selected. She also currently is taking part in a research and development project being led by Colorado Springs, Col.-based BSCS Science Learning. The project, called Digging Deeper, is bringing teachers and scientists together to develop protocols to teach plant biology in hands-on formats.

This aligns perfectly with the teaching methods of Wudtke, who before joining MELHS was manager of the Life Science Galleries at the St. Louis Science Center.

“I'm not the kind of teacher to just lecture about information,” she said. “Instead I'm going to use my knowledge to help students navigate data and discover principles on their own.”

Wudtke said she is looking forward to a summer full of research and continuing education.

“I just love learning,” she said.

Metro-East Lutheran High School (MELHS) has been providing academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment for more than 40 years. **For more information about Metro-East Lutheran High School** go to www.melhs.org.