PROJECT LEARNING TREE SOUTH CAROLINA

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
Friday, August 18, 2023

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# Hoekstra Named SC PLT Leadership in Education Award Recipient

Dr. Lynn Hoekstra

COLUMBIA — Dr. Lynn Hoekstra of Columbia has received the 2023 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Leadership in Education Award. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee in July.

This marks the second time Hoekstra has received the award, formerly known as the Outstanding Educator of the Year, making her the first two-time honoree since the award's inception in 1997.

"I love sharing PLT with teachers because it supplements what they are doing," Hoekstra said. "It enriches their teaching without adding an additional instructional burden. Each time I have shared these activities, teachers have participated with enthusiasm and have expressed appreciation for the active learning ideas which they can bring back to their own students. PLT serves as a doorway to nature, enabling teachers to bring kids outside to learn and grow."

Hoekstra is a professor of education and Teacher Education Program Director at Columbia International University, where she has included PLT Early Childhood curriculum training in her syllabus for the past six years.

Since becoming a PLT facilitator in 2018, Hoekstra has facilitated 10 professional development events, training 132 pre-service and in-service teachers in a PLT activity guide. She has also presented about PLT at three teacher professional meetings and conferences, reaching a total of 87 educators.

Hoekstra was born and raised on her family's farm in Illinois, where she first learned to treat the land with respect. As a middle school teacher in Michigan, Hoekstra developed an appreciation for the habitat and landscape of the Lake Michigan dunes while leading student field experiences. This contributed to the development of her personal feeling of responsibility toward the environment and a desire to protect the resources of our planet.

Living in southern California for a time helped Hoekstra become more aware of our need to conserve water and green space. Because of these formative experiences, she is committed to helping students, teachers and teachers-in-training learn more about the natural world and appreciate the importance of being good stewards of our earth.

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**Project Learning Tree** is a nationwide, award-winning environmental education program that supplements curricula used by teachers, parents, and community leaders for students from preschool to 12th grade. A program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, PLT uses trees and forests as windows on the world to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship to students while fostering professional development among the educators who use it. In South Carolina, PLT is sponsored by the Forestry Association of South Carolina's SC Forestry Foundation, the SC Forestry Commission and the State Department of Education.