



INDIANAPOLIS—Laurie Smith from [Sumner-Eddyville-Miller \(SEM\) Public School](#) has recently been named the 2021 National Rural Teacher of the Year.

The Sumner, Nebraska fourth grade teacher received the award during this year's [National Forum to Advance Rural Education](#) hosted by the National Rural Education Association (NREA) November 11-12 in Indianapolis.

According to the convention [program](#),

*Laurie took her first teaching job in August 1996 at Garden County Schools where she taught second grade until 2000 before taking a position for Chappell Public Schools (later became the consolidated school of Creek Valley). Laurie taught first grade until 2007, and then moved back to central Nebraska. Upon moving back, she accepted the position of starting a part-time preschool program, and now is a fourth-grade teacher, which she absolutely loves.*

*Laurie is Married to Todd Smith and has three children, Brayden (24 years old and a graduate of Southeast Community College in Beatrice, NE), Parker (20 and will complete his requirements at Central Community College in Kearney, NE in December and will transfer into the University of Nebraska at Kearney to complete his degree), and Josie (16 years old and a junior at [Sumner-Eddyville-Miller](#)).*

The forum was held in Indianapolis with a hybrid format in which attendees could attend in-person or virtually. The event inspires collaboration and innovation amongst national experts, K-12 and higher educators, leading researchers, policymakers, and philanthropic leaders.

Event attendees and NREA members aim to create meaningful learning experiences for rural students by leading together and helping communities innovate and leverage their local assets.