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PHOTO BY OREGON DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Kari Pilgrim Ricker (second from left) is named Oregon Teacher of the Year during a recent ceremony at Churchill High in Eugene. Also pictured (from left) are Eugene Superintendent Gustavo Balderas, Gov. Kate Brown and Oregon schools chief Colt Gill.

Educator promotes equity in health careers

Teacher of the Year

An African-American educator who has focused on promoting diversity and equity in science, engineering, technology, and math (STEM) has been honored with the title of Oregon Teacher of the Year.

With a passion for leadership

and a tireless advocacy for her students, Keri Pilgrim Ricker, of Churchill High School in Eugene was presented with the award during a ceremony last month with Oregon Department of Education Director Colt Gill, Gov. Kate Brown, Eugene School District

Superintendent Gustavo Balderas, and Churchill High Principal Greg Borgerding.

Pilgrim Ricker has used her background in biology, ecology and animal science to develop a customized curriculum for her students rooted in inquiry and re-

al-world application.

Focusing on career and technical education as a health occupations educator, she champions some of the most in-demand jobs on the market. She maintains a collaborative network of healthcare professionals, non-profit organiza-

tions, post-secondary institutions and families to create dynamic healthcare simulation units aligned to her students' career interests.

Her classrooms are also focused on diversity of thought, ideas, people and narratives.

"When students feel the need to discuss a topic I hold that space," she said. "We agree to listen, stay present, accept discomfort, speak our truths and accept non-closure."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15