

## TOP TEACHER

Ben Barkey is AFA's  
National Teacher  
of the Year.



Ben Barkey guides a CyberPatriot team at Washington STEM Academy, Warsaw, Ind., in 2015. The Lawrence D. Bell Museum Chapter in Indiana nominated him as AFA's National Teacher of the Year.

Teacher. Coach. Leader. All of these words describe the Air Force Association's National Teacher of the Year for 2017, Benjamin R. Barkey.

At the time of his nomination this spring, he was the assistant principal at Warsaw Community High School in Indiana, leading development of its science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs.

He had already been a middle school teacher for science, math, and robotics; a STEM instructional coach (teaching teachers to teach STEM, as he describes it); and a coach for school activities ranging from golf to LEGO robotics.

More reasons for his selection as AFA's No. 1 teacher? How about these:

### #1 ACHIEVEMENT

Through a yearlong process, Barkey led Washington Elementary School to become one of the first certified STEM schools in Indiana. He considers this his top achievement. As he wrote in his Teacher of the Year essay for AFA, "STEM is no longer just content to our school community; it is an educational style, a delivery method, a way students want to learn. ... It's our present day world."

With a STEM friendly environment, his school—now called Washington STEM

Academy—was able to keep students engaged and to move beyond just preparing for standardized testing.

### #1 TEACHING TACTIC

Barkey said his best STEM teaching tactic has been to make connections with the community. "This tactic is vital in connecting teachers and students with STEM education," he wrote in an email.

Warsaw is known for its orthopedic industry, he said, and a lot of his students' parents work in that sector. "We intention-



By Greg Ennis

ally created STEM units that focused on orthopedics. Warsaw is also blessed with a lot of lakes and streams, so we also created a lot of units focusing on that topic."

### #1 TEACHING MOMENT

Asked to name a standout moment from 15 years as a STEM advocate, Barkey answered:

CyberPatriot, 2015.

His first group of teams that year was a challenge. "At the time, I knew very little about CyberPatriot and how to teach students computer IT skills," he explained. Barkey wasn't so sure his five teams—only "moderately prepared"—would be up to the task and figured they would quit rather than finish the six-hour competition.

"I underestimated those students," he admitted. "In education, we are worried about students being fatigued after a short time. CyberPatriot blew that theory out of the water."

**Greg Ennis** was AFA's 2016 National Teacher of the Year and is a Tennessee Valley Chapter, Ala., member. This school year, **Benjamin Barkey** became principal of Madison Elementary School in Warsaw, Ind. His goal is to guide it toward becoming a STEM certified school.