



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## Will Miller of Charlemont, MA awarded the 2023-24 National Signature Project Runner Up Award!

Charlemont, MA — May 24, 2023

Rural Schools Collaborative is pleased to announce our [2023-24 National Signature Project Award recipients](#). These three outstanding rural educators will work with their respective students on place-based projects, which address specific community issues. **We believe that rural teachers are placemakers.** Through place-based learning efforts, teachers are able to express their dedication to the community by rooting classroom teachings in the unique history, environment, economy, and culture of the location in which they educate.

Each year, the National Rural Education Association (NREA) and Rural Schools Collaborative (RSC) accept applications for the National Signature Project Award (NSPA), a \$2,500 grant to an outstanding and innovative classroom project that exemplifies the very best in place-based education. RSC and the NREA are thrilled to again award two additional rural teachers with \$1,500 toward their individual place-based education projects. [Learn more about the program here!](#)

In your region, Rural Schools Collaborative and the National Rural Education Association are proud to announce Will Miller of Charlemont, MA., as a 2023-24 National Signature Project Award runner up recipient for his place-based education project, "Developing a Sustainable Maple Syrup Production System."



Starting in 2023, students will research, calculate, harvest, split, and season the necessary amount of fuel wood from the woods in preparation for the sugaring season in 2024. During the school year, students will conduct cultural and ecological research into sugaring practices by interviewing local sugar makers, members of the local indigenous community, foresters, and historians, reading peer-reviewed research on sustainable sugaring techniques, and surveying the campus. During the sugaring season, students will engage in the various tasks required for making syrup, including tapping maple trees, collecting sap in buckets, testing the sap for sugar content, designing, building, and maintaining a wood-fired boiling operation, and preserving the finished syrup. The goal is to

provide members of the school community and our various community volunteers with a modest amount of syrup as a thank you for contributing knowledge and labor to the efforts. The season will culminate in a pancake and waffle feast hosted on campus where students will present their documentary stories of the project from start to finish. Students will build on the 2024 season by planting new maple trees annually and continuing to develop the sugaring operation whilst finding new ways to incorporate the process into the place-based curricula in science, math, and humanities.

