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Award Winning Miami Science Teacher Visits Washington, D.C.

Bertha Vazquez, recipient of national environmental prize, tours 'green' sites

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Bertha Vazquez, a middle school teacher at George Washington Carver Middle School in Coral Gables, Fla. has been spending the week visiting national organizations and local sites tied to her interest in environmental education.

Vazquez is the third teacher to receive the Richard C. Bartlett Education Award, an annual prize given by the National Environmental Education Foundation to a teacher who serves as an inspiration and model for others.

Vazquez, a science teacher for two decades, spearheaded efforts to green her school's campus, launched a recycling program at her school, led students on annual bird counts and field trips and inspired students and colleagues not just at her school but throughout the Miami-Dade County Public Schools to make "green" education part of every subject area. Environmentally themed lessons have been integrated into math, language arts, visual arts and even French classes.

Despite being on summer break, Vazquez and her husband, also a teacher in Miami-Dade schools, are maintaining a busy schedule in Washington, meeting with leaders from the National Audubon Society, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Project Learning Tree and the National Wildlife Federation among others. She also toured the LEED Platinum-certified Sidwell Friends Middle School, met with representatives from the National Weather Service, NOAA and the American Meteorological Society.

"This visit is really as much for our benefit as it is for Bertha's," said Diane Wood, president of the National Environmental Education Foundation. "Bertha has a way of inspiring everyone she meets. Her success in extending environmental education far beyond the walls of her classroom has made a difference throughout her school and increasingly in her school district. She is phenomenally modest, always sharing credit and recognizing her peers and principal at George Washington Carver as core to her success. We have been fortunate enough to have a week to allow her to both gather and share ideas with national leaders in environmental education."

Vazquez's visit to the District comes two months after she was presented with the \$5,000 Bartlett award.

Richard C. Bartlett, for whom the award is named, has been active in conservation for more than 40 years. He has co-authored several textbooks and three books and has himself received numerous awards for his work in marketing and as an executive.

Bartlett became a trustee of The Nature Conservancy of Texas in 1989 and was appointed chairman in 1994. He currently serves on numerous other boards, including NatureServe, the National Council for Science and the Environment, the Aldo Leopold Foundation and the Center for Big Bend Studies.

He is the former chairman of the National Environmental Education Foundation, where he continues to serve as an honorary board member.

Nearly 90 teachers from more than 30 states were nominated for the award for the 2009 cycle. Two merit awardees were also selected.

The Bartlett award is made possible by Baxter Healthcare Corporation.

For more information on Bertha Vazquez, visit: http://www.neefusa.org/bartlettaward/bart_award.htm

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