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Colorado Teacher Wins National Environmental Prize

Chicago, Portland Educators Given Merit Awards

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Installing solar panels on the school roof, prepping students to present a climate change project to scientists, designing a straw bale classroom and involving colleagues and numerous subject areas in environmental lessons – those are just a few of the reasons Susy Ellison has been recognized for her outstanding contributions to environmental education.

Ellison will receive the Richard C. Bartlett Environmental Education Award, given annually by the National Environmental Education Foundation, recognizing teachers who inspire their students and their peers during National Teacher Appreciation Week, held from May 3-May 7.

A teacher at Yampah Mountain High School in Glenwood Springs, Colo., Ellison has a background in wildlife biology and 23 years of teaching experience. She teaches science to teen parents who attend the alternative school.

Ellison always seems to find new ways to engage her students and colleagues while improving the environment at her school and in her community. She led energy audits of her high school, installed a weather station and geodesic dome greenhouse and took students to Washington, D.C. for the Solar Decathlon. When she taught classes on alternative fuels, her students not only met with producers and users of biodiesel, they made their own.

She reaches out to the entire school community, making environmental education a cross-curricular endeavor. Her projects involve other teachers and subjects, proving that environmental education can be integrated across a broad array of subject areas.

“Every year, the Bartlett Award recognizes the teachers who inspire everyone around them with their passion and energy,” said Diane Wood, president of the National Environmental Education Foundation. “Susy exemplifies the spirit of the award with her ingenuity. She’s a catalyst at her school, driven by her own curiosity and commitment to her students, her school and to the environment.”

Ellison said the Bartlett prize reflected as much about her students and colleagues as her.

“I am honored to have been selected as the 2010 recipient of the Richard C. Bartlett Environmental Education Award. When I review the path that has brought me to this point I see a long and winding route of meandering trails and diverse branches leading to that magical, elusive, and sometimes mysterious place known as ‘environmental literacy,’” she said. “I am proud that I have been able to be a guide for both colleagues and students by providing them with the knowledge and tools required to travel a similar path. This award is as much about them as it is about me. It is a celebration of the creation of citizens who understand and take responsibility for their impacts on the planet and feel empowered to become agents of positive environmental change.”

Richard 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.

Bartlett said Ellison sets an example for environmental education around the country.

"With her hands-on style and her knack for involving students and the rest of the campus in environmental lessons, Susy Ellison encapsulates what's best about environmental education – its ability to connect the lesson to the larger world and the student to the issues that matter in their lives and their communities," Bartlett said. "I commend Ms. Ellison for her dedication, her ingenuity and her inspirational example."

Ellison will travel to Washington, D.C. this summer to meet with environmental leaders and the staff of the National Environmental Education Foundation.

More than 80 teachers were nominated for the award. Two runners-up were also selected, each receiving a \$750 award.

Jill Krynski, Bloom High School, Chicago Heights, Ill.

Merit award winner Jill Krynski of Bloom High School initiated an environmental science program focusing on the redevelopment of brownfield lots near her school. Students developed remediation and redevelopment plans and created 3D models for features integrating recycled construction materials and renewable energy sources.

Krynski, a biology and environmental sciences teacher, leads a hands-on science class in a greenhouse and outdoor classroom. She also has led environmental education initiatives outside of the classroom, leading a biodiesel outreach program with the school science club, creating environmental education units for the Earth Day Network's Educator's Network website and starting school-wide greening, including the installation of solar panels, native plant landscaping, battery recycling and use of greener, non-toxic cleaning products.

Jill Semlick, Pauling Academy of Integrated Sciences, Portland, Ore.

A veteran high school teacher with 24 years experience, Jill Semlick, a biology, ecology and chemistry teacher at Pauling Academy of Integrated Sciences, integrated the concepts of Expeditionary Learning – standards-based learning adventures and community-service activities – with her own teaching methods.

Her projects have included the "Northern Flying Squirrel" project, in which students gain hands-on experience in fieldwork and natural resource management while providing valuable data to the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Her students have also created an original play for elementary school children about conservation. Semlick has also obtained more than \$300,000 in grants for her programs, students and school in the past seven years.

The Richard C. Bartlett Environmental Education Award is made possible by Baxter Healthcare Corporation.

For information on past winners, visit: http://www.neefusa.org/bartlettaward/bart_award.htm

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NEEF partners with professionals in health, education, media, business and public land management to promote daily actions for helping people protect and enjoy the environment. Through our primary programs -- Classroom Earth, National Public Lands Day, National Environmental Education Week, Business and Environment, Earth Gauge® and Health & Environment -- we offer Americans knowledge to live by. To learn more, call (202) 833-2933 or visit www.neefusa.org.

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