2012 Wisconsin School Forest Awards

School Forest Educators

Cindy Damrow
Twin Oaks School Forest - DC Everest School District, Weston, WI
Nominators: Scot Abel and Janis Krueger
Pictured (L-R): Shirley Bargander – WDNR Forester, Cindy Damrow, Gretchen Marshall
Cindy’s energy, creativity, and dedication to environmental education have provided numerous benefits for students in the DC Everest School district. She regularly goes above and beyond to provide programming for thousands of students at the Twin Oaks School Forest. Cindy has an innovative and enthusiastic approach to each lesson she prepares and teaches. She has led collaborative curriculum development for the forest, trains teachers and community volunteers, and successfully obtains grant money to fund numerous projects. One such project is the Wild Wisconsin Exhibit, which allows students to experience Wisconsin’s diverse habitats and wildlife in a dynamic, interactive museum setting. Cindy’s collaborative work and abilities to mobilize resources has brought about a variety of opportunities for children to learn of and engage with the environment at the school forest in unparalleled ways.

Dawn Ertl
Butternut School Forest, Butternut, WI
Nominators: Gary Vander Wyst, David Podmolik, and Laurie Fox
Dawn has been a leader and driving-force behind the development and utilization of the Butternut School Forest. She organized a red-pine planting project and students were able to see management practices and the complete life cycle of trees from regeneration, thinning, and final harvesting. Dawn planned and developed an educational trail throughout the school forest. Her students identified trees, then researched, created, and erected user-friendly stations with information about each tree species. Understanding the need for an outdoor classroom, Dawn led an effort to obtain grant money to make this a reality for the school district. The resulting green classroom was built in partnership with the district’s technology education students, is powered with solar panels, has a composting toilet, and will provide endless learning opportunities for students in the Butternut School District for years to come. Dawn’s persistence and dedication to developing the Butternut’s school forest program will provide numerous experiences and opportunities for students to excel in their learning.

Penny Bohringer
Paul Brandt School Forest, Boscobel, WI
Nominators: Ruth Bauer, Nancy Sanger, and Eric Kinny
Pictured (L-R): Gretchen Marshall, Penny Bohringer
Penny’s dedication to education has allowed students in her 2nd grade class to benefit from an environment with a beautiful landscape and unlimited learning opportunities at the Paul Brant School Forest in Boscobel. She created Fantastic Forest Fridays in which her students participate in lessons, experiments, and projects at the school forest that coordinate with the second grade core curriculum and are aligned with math, science, language arts, and reading. The students learn how to think like a scientist and keep a journal. Penny is also an active member of the school forest committee, helps write and edit grants, was on the team to write an education plan for the school forest, and provides leadership for Family Forest Night. Her energy and enthusiasm in helping students and the community benefit from the Paul Brandt School Forest has not gone unnoticed and is celebrated in the Boscobel community. Penny’s ideas and commitment to her students and the school forest allow them to experience fresh air, exercise, and most importantly, great learning opportunities in a beautiful forest.
Community Members

Wade Pettit
Granton School Forest, Granton, WI
Nominators: Cheryl Steinbach, Jeanette Steiner, Annette Woller

Pictured (L-R): Wade Pettit, Gretchen Marshall

Wade has been an instrumental team member in the development of the Granton School Forest. He is an active community member on the school forest advisory board, volunteers in the natural resources and forestry class at the high school, and plans, implements, and finds materials for little or no cost to support the development of many projects in the forest. Wade has spent countless hours volunteering his time and expertise in the school forest. He created a map of the property, developed trails, and with the help of his family, designed and constructed beautiful bridges in the forest so that all aspects of the property are accessible to students. The Granton School District is proud of the excitement, ingenuity, passion, hard work, and dedication Wade shares with their students to create such a magnificent school forest program.

Mike Toneys
Southern Door School Forest, Brussels, WI
Nominators: Chris Plzak, Rebecca Knudson, and Laurie Connell

Pictured (L-R): Mike Toneys, Gretchen Marshall, Chris Plzak – WDNR forester

Mike is a community member with an infectious personality that has transformed the school forest program in the Southern Door School District. Mike, in partnership with his wife Carol, volunteer in the elementary school and enhance student learning opportunities at the school forest. Mike has led an effort to control invasive species taking-over the forest property, organized the revitalization of the forest’s nature center, coordinated a trail improvements and the creation of signs and maps on the trails through the school forest, spends countless hours leading students and their teachers through the forest, helped resurrect the sugar shack to make maple syrup, and has written grants to benefit the Southern Door School Forest program. Through Mike’s dedication, students are able to access the school forest and learn while visiting the pond, travelling through the prairie, or walking through a forest filled with giant beech trees. The Southern Door community is enriched through Mike’s enthusiasm for kids, our natural resources, and the limitless opportunities he provides for others to experience the school forest.

Resource Professional

Mike Rankin
Former Wisconsin DNR Forester, Chippewa County, WI
Nominators: Richard Erickson, Paul Schley, and Greg Baker

Pictured (L-R): Richard Erickson, Mike Rankin, Gretchen Marshall

Mike’s expertise as a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources forester has been invaluable to the Cornell School District. Mike has been involved with their school forests for over 20 years. He helped the school conduct timber harvests and assisted with trail design and construction throughout the forest properties. Mike generously donated his time and talents when needed and also graciously served as a guest speaker in Cornell’s classrooms on forestry topics and conducted numerous forest fire demonstrations for the students. School district staff are grateful for Mike’s help over the years and consider it a pleasure to work with him. Although Mike is now retired, he has left a legacy of forestry education with the Cornell School District and was a huge asset in the sustainable management of their school forest properties.