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PRESS RELEASE

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KACEE ANNOUNCES ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AWARDS

The Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2009 Excellence in Conservation and Environmental Education Awards. Nominated by their peers, these awardees exhibit outstanding innovation, leadership and achievement, as well as collaboration and cooperation within the environmental education field. New this year, three schools are receiving Kansas Green Schools of the Year Awards. "We are thrilled to honor these deserving individuals and organizations, who give so much of their time and are so dedicated to environmental education in Kansas," said KACEE President Schanee' Anderson, of the Sedgwick County Zoo.

John K. Strickler Award

This award, named after one of KACEE's founders and first executive director John Strickler, honors the lifetime achievements, contributions, and leadership of individuals in the Kansas conservation and environmental education field.

Rex Buchanan, Kansas Geological Survey, Lawrence

Rex Buchanan, Associate Director for Public Outreach at the Kansas Geological Survey, has devoted decades of exceptional service to environmental education in Kansas. An accomplished author of several books (including *Kansas Geology* and *Roadside Kansas*), Rex has twice served as President of KACEE. He has been instrumental in organizing annual field conferences for Kansas legislators and decision makers.

KACEE Awards

KACEE Awards are given in several categories and recognize outstanding leadership, achievements, and collaborations by individuals and organizations with at least five years' experience in conservation and environmental education in Kansas.

PreK-16 Educator: Tim Oberhelman, Olathe South High School

Tim Oberhelman, science and biology teacher at Olathe South High School, has been passionate about ecology since high school in the 1970s. He is dedicated to motivating his students to become active in solving challenges to our community and world. He has been instrumental in a successful school cell phone collection program, promoting conservation careers, and in all of Olathe South's efforts to "think green."

PreK-16 Educator: Marylee Ramsay and Denise Scribner, Goddard High School

With a combined 40+ years of experience, Marylee Ramsay and Denise Scribner provide the leadership for Goddard High School's ecology and environmental science classes. Ecology class students provide support for a district-wide recycling program, which collected 20 tons of paper, 28,000 plastic bottles, and nearly 10,000 aluminum cans last school year. Their students have been active in ECO-Meet and with their Outdoor Wildlife Learning Site, developing an OWLS user guide this year.

Community/Non-Profit: Jim Mason, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

Jim Mason is a staff naturalist at Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita. His work there combined with volunteer efforts for the website Natural Kansas and the Kansas Natural Resources Council make him a perfect fit for this award. Jim's service includes serving as webmaster of the GPNC website, which received 2.1 million page reads last year. Jim has presented approximately 2,500 nature education programs since 1988, and created the Natural Kansas website.

Agriculture: Roberta Spencer, Jackson County Conservation District, Holton

Roberta Spencer is well-known among agricultural and livestock producers as well as students and teachers in Jackson County. She brings conservation and environmental education to them and searches for ways to utilize resources that will help producers understand the environment, as well as protect water quality. She is working with Delaware WRAPS to host a daylong no-till field day this summer, and serves on the board of the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

Government: Kansas Environmental Leadership Program (KELP)

From a pilot class in 1999, the Kansas Environmental Leadership Program (KELP) has developed into a 10-month-long program focused on enabling citizens to become better versed in environmental knowledge and increasing their leadership skills. Applied Leadership Projects translate the knowledge and skills into practical application. Based on local issues, the projects have in some instances become ongoing programs. Including the pilot class, 239 citizens have participated.

Rising Star: Katie S. Miller, Twin Lakes WRAPS, Council Grove

Over and over, Katie Miller is described as a "go-getter." As project coordinator of the Twin Lakes Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS), she works to inform, educate, and promote water quality in the Neosho watershed. Her job includes putting on the successful Twin Lakes Water Festival, which educates students to explore our natural resources through a multi-sensory, hands-on learning approach. The festival has educated approximately 2,700 students in the past 3 years.

Kansas Green School of the Year: Starside Elementary School, DeSoto USD 232

Starside Elementary has been "green" for the past eight years, with recycling bins in each classroom and office. "Mother Nature" begins each assembly and appears in morning announcements every Wednesday to discuss environmental issues. Top Dog, a traveling trophy made of recycled materials, is awarded each week to a class or student exhibiting environmental awareness. Starside's mascot this year, made of recycled aluminum foil, is Bob the Ball. Starside ties its student-driven environmental efforts to its character education program and has pencils made of recycled newspapers in vending machines.

Kansas Green School of the Year: Buhler High School, USD 313

At Buhler High School, students, staff, and administration have a keen interest in protecting our environment. They have collaboratively created a sustainable program that seeks to protect, conserve, and recycle the energy used on a day-to-day basis. Involvement by students is critical to implementing the school's green philosophy that will sustain its existence despite changes in teaching staff and administration. In 2007, the school district reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 1,105 tons, and received the Energy Star Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Kansas Green School of the Year: Wyandotte High School, USD 500

Eight years ago, students at Wyandotte High School had a vision of transforming one of their courtyards into an outdoor environmental education classroom. Writing grants to raise funds, the students first planted a rose garden, then constructed native plant areas, twenty raised beds with individually controlled automatic sprinklers for special plantings and research, and a stream that runs into a pond. Botany classes have collected data for the past two years, which they have submitted to Prairies Across Kansas, a partnership of schools that collect data on Kansas native prairies, which is sent to Konza Prairie Research Station.

Awardees will be recognized on Friday, 3 April 2009, at the Kansas Museum of History in Topeka. Rex Buchanan will be the featured speaker. Honorary chairs are Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Adrian and Kris Polansky. Rod Bremby, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, will present the Kansas Green Schools Awards. For more information on the awards celebration event, visit www.kacee.org or call 785-532-3322.