

2012

Earth Heroes at School

Awards Presentation – April 26, 2012



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division

For their outstanding contributions in schools and beyond, King County recognizes these Earth Heroes and their work to protect the environment.

Teachers

Darcy Borg, Camelot Elementary School Federal Way Public Schools

Darcy has been instrumental in gathering community and funding support for the Camelot Elementary Community Garden. She has sought gardening and horticultural training for herself and, in turn, has led professional development workshops for staff. Her fundraising, teaching, and organizational efforts have been indispensable to the development of this important educational resource.

Vicki Conrad, Chestnut Hill Academy, Bellevue

Vicki created a school Green Team, set up a food scrap collection program, led the effort to plant a school vegetable garden, and helped implement energy conservation measures to qualify Chestnut Hill Academy as a Level Two King County Green School. Vicki's work has encouraged students to compost and recycle at home and to educate others about the importance of caring for our environment.

Renee de Tolla and Ashley Hirst, Grand Ridge Elementary School, Issaquah School District

Through Renee and Ashley's efforts, Grand Ridge Elementary moved from Level One to Level Two in the King County Green Schools Program. Renee and Ashley also helped ensure the installation of solar panels and a wind turbine at the school. Renee's third-grade class is also recognized for its many environmental projects to increase recycling, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect salmon.

Scott Meyer, Martin Sortun Elementary School Kent School District

For the last four years, Scott has led Martin Sortun Elementary in developing and improving its resource

conservation program to attain Level Three King County Green School status, thus serving as a model for other district schools. Scott developed a student leadership program, organized family nights to teach parents about recycling, and is seeking a grant to extend the recycling program to a neighborhood park.

Tom Nowak, Skyview Junior High School Northshore School District

Tom is the assistant project manager for Skyview Junior High's Outdoor Environmental Learning Center and has helped refine and support many sustainability projects, including the school's water resource and conservation curriculum and its forest and soil units. He also institutionalized the school-wide food scrap collection program and acquired funding and materials to raise Coho salmon in the classroom.

Debbie Sells, Martin Sortun Elementary School Kent School District

For the past three years, Debbie has led her class in a service project that enhances the health of the local watershed. Each year she invites a naturalist to provide background concepts to help her students understand their roles as stewards of the environment. She then works with the students in removing invasive plants and replacing them with native species.

Lisa Torres, Nautilus K-8 School Federal Way Public Schools

Lisa organizes and directs about 65 students in recycling and other environmental projects. She trains her students to teach others about proper sorting of materials in the lunchroom. In a week, the school collects about 395 gallons of materials that are kept out of the landfill. They also do a yearly clean-up of Redondo Creek, most recently collecting 1,320 pounds of garbage.

Staff

Matt Arnold, Kent-Meridian High School Kent School District

Matt, a teaching assistant in the Adaptive Support Center (ASC), started the recycling program with his special needs students four years ago. The program serves the entire campus and provides a means for the ASC students to interact on a daily basis with the regular education students. Matt has enabled his students to become an integral part of the school's sustainability efforts.

Angi Jefferies, Lea Hill Elementary School Auburn School District

Angi, head custodian at Lea Hill Elementary, has been key to the success of the lunchroom recycling program. She has trained students and staff to efficiently separate their recyclables, compostables, and waste, and has trained fifth-grade Green Team members as lunchtime sorting supervisors. Angi conscientiously and creatively recommends other green ideas to Lea Hill Principal Ed Herda.

Ken Lao, Career Academy at Truman High School Federal Way Public Schools

Ken, head custodian at Career Academy, guides, implements, and monitors all resource conservation efforts, including recycling and food scrap collection which yield a recycling rate of 50 percent. Ken has eliminated the use of toxic cleaners at the school and handles the proper management of hazardous items such as fluorescent light tubes, batteries, and electronic wastes.

Gary Plano, Superintendent of Schools Mercer Island School District

Gary has provided continued and enthusiastic support for participation by the district and all of its schools in the King County Green Schools Program. He has attended all meetings and followed through on all commitments, including a green page on the district's website. Gary's leadership has ensured that schools throughout the district are reducing and recycling waste and conserving water and energy.

Volunteer

Lucia Pirzio-Biroli, West Mercer Elementary School Mercer Island School District

Lucia created and runs the Leap for Green Fair which showcases products, services, and opportunities that enable students and their families to become better stewards of the environment. She incorporates school science fairs in Leap for Green to further involve the students. Lucia also organizes the entire school district to participate in International Walk to School Day.

Students

Canyon Creek Elementary School Sixth Grade Students Northshore School District

To reduce Canyon Creek Elementary's ecological footprint, sixth grade students created projects to support the waste reduction and the classroom and lunchroom recycling programs they helped institute. They produced presentations, posters, and videos to explain and promote the recycling programs to other students. Their efforts have resulted in a 50 percent reduction in garbage.

Meeker Middle School Leadership Class Kent School District

To increase recycling and awareness of its importance, Travis Wood's leadership class designed a competition among the three lunch periods to see who could recycle the most. They staffed the recycling stations to ensure proper recycling, created a mascot to encourage participation, and produced videos to inform students of ways to keep their campus clean and green.

Meridian Middle School Leadership Class Kent School District

Twenty eighth-grade students wanting to reduce their school's waste and raise awareness about the environment embarked on a project to increase the efficiency of the school recycling program and educate the student body on the new lunchroom routine. Their efforts resulted in a 25 percent decrease in waste and a near doubling of its recycling rate.

Sandy Zimmermann, Highline Big Picture High School Highline Public Schools

For her senior project, Sandy initiated a trash audit, which led to her role in expanding the recycling program, organizing a pep rally to motivate students to properly recycle, and coordinating support from the district, facility staff, and teachers. This project was the culmination of four years of environmental commitment by Sandy.

Newcastle Elementary School Issaquah School District

A King County Green School since 2009, Newcastle Elementary ensures its recycling and composting programs thrive through its Waste Watchers—students who monitor the lunchroom containers to ensure proper sorting. Staff meeting notes are no longer printed, and teachers and students work together to post signs about conserving resources. Newcastle has increased its recycling rate from 50 to 60 percent.

Program/School

Environmental and Adventure School (EAS) Lake Washington School District

Through its Community Stewardship Projects, EAS provides its students with opportunities to help the environment and the community. Three times a year, students divide into ten different project areas. Examples of projects are building a nature trail boardwalk, removing invasive plant species, teaching elementary students about habitat, and educating the community on the effects of pollution.

Issaquah Valley Elementary School Issaquah School District

Issaquah Valley Elementary, in coordination with the City of Issaquah, created an eco-leaders program for fifth-graders. Four times a year, fifth grade students teach environmental topics to other classes in the school. They initiated a waste-free lunch day during which the school's 475 students generated a total of only seven gallons of waste. The recycling rate for the past year rose from 44 to 54 percent.

Margaret Mead Elementary School Lake Washington School District

Upon learning that it was the third lowest in the district in terms of recycling, Margaret Mead Elementary established seven recycling stations, created posters, made a video, and scheduled daily monitors to oversee the recycling program. As a result, Mead has reduced garbage pick-up from twice a week to once a week and has created a greater sense of environmental responsibility on its campus.

Special Recognition Committee's Choice



These two projects impressed the Earth Heroes Committee for their practical and creative reuse of existing resources.

Mike Jackson, Tahoma High School Tahoma School District

Mike involved his PC Tech Repair students in repairing 129 old district computers and distributing them free to needy families in the community. He dedicated countless hours toward learning the computer systems, having his students become Microsoft-certified in refurbishing so that software could be purchased at a discount, and training families in the use of their newly refurbished computers.

Mike Nelson and Rick Boulumpus Stillwater Elementary School, Riverview School District

Custodians Mike and Rick have saved thousands of dollars by repurposing and reusing furniture, equipment, and materials that would otherwise have been discarded. Old projector screens became window shades, chalkboards and whiteboards were converted to display spaces, and new uses were found for old filing cabinets. Money saved has benefited the school's Science Docent Program.

King County Green Schools Program

These 2012 Earth Hero at School winners also participate in the King County Green Schools Program, which assists schools in improving their conservation practices.

- Big Picture High School, Level One
- Camelot Elementary School, Level Three
- Canyon Creek Elementary School, Level One
- Career Academy at Truman High School, Level One
- Chestnut Hill Academy, Level Two
- Grand Ridge Elementary School, Level One
- Issaquah Valley Elementary School, Level One
- Kent-Meridian High School, Level Two
- Lea Hill Elementary School, Level One
- Margaret Mead Elementary School, Level One
- Martin Sortun Elementary School, Level Three
- Meeker Middle School, Level One
- Meridian Middle School, Level One
- Mercer Island School District, Level One: 2 schools; Level Two: 3 schools
- Nautilus K-8 School, Level Two
- Newcastle Elementary School, Level Two
- Skyview Junior High School, Level Two
- Tahoma Senior High School, Level One
- West Mercer Elementary School, Level One

Congratulations to all winners!

