

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Green Youth Award

Students from throughout Illinois honored at ceremony at Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield

SPRINGFIELD – The hard work and commitment of students and schools across Illinois to exhibit environmental leadership and stewardship was recognized today at the Governor’s Green Youth Awards for

Excellence at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield. The awards, administered by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), acknowledged outstanding environmental protection and conservation projects by Illinois’ young people.



“These youth are to be commended not just for their excellent work in these projects, but also for their leadership and initiative” said Governor Blagojevich. “Their environmental stewardship sets a wonderful example for their peers, communities, and Illinois as a whole.”

The winners of the Governor’s Green Youth Awards were students who worked on environmental projects either individually or as part of a group, and K-12 schools recognized for their achievements in waste reduction, energy efficiency, and sustainability.

“These projects demonstrate the innovative ways young people throughout the state are working to protect Illinois’ environment,” said Illinois EPA Director Doug Scott. “Through these awards, we hope to teach other young people about the importance of environmental protection.”

2008 award winners are:

Taylor McGillis – Toluca

This is Taylor’s third year winning a Green Youth Award. Taylor’s project, “Forging for the Future,” was both restorative and preservative while enhancing the beauty of a local park and educating the public on native grasses, wildflowers and the benefits of soil and water conservation.

Charlie Vestal, United High School, CUSD #304 – Monmouth

Charlie created “United for a Greener Tomorrow,” a recycling program that has been instituted at his school. He recognized the need to recycle paper, plastics, cans, magazines & newspapers to help reduce the amount of waste that the school deposits in area landfills.

Yasmin Darwish, Chester High School – Chester

Yasmin’s project “Recycle, Reuse, Renew,” consisted of many different tasks. She created the Chester High School Environmental Club and arranged for recycling bins to be placed throughout her school. She also arranged for individuals to speak at the Chester Public Library about recycling and public butterfly gardens which she developed herself. Yasmin also applied for an “Illinois Zero Waste Schools Grant Program,” and organized an Earth Day celebration which included a poster competition.

Earth ANGELs (Agents Nurturing & Guarding our Environmental Legacy), Stuart R. Paddock Elementary School – Palatine

The Earth ANGELs' project, "Earth ANGELs are going green in 2008," involved 26 third and fourth grade students who learned about saving energy, water, and natural resources while teaching others. They held an "Electricity Day," selling compact fluorescent light bulbs and educating families on how much energy and money the bulbs can save. They also held reduced waste lunches and awarded students who brought their lunch in reusable containers, and a "Save a Gallon" campaign educating parents on how much gas Americans use and how much they could save. They asked families to pledge to save a gallon during Earth Week by walking, biking or car-pooling.

St. Jacob Elementary School – 5th Graders – Highland

The fifth graders' project, "Recycling – A Natural Part of Life," engaged their entire school, along with the community, in numerous recycling ventures. They recycled everything from eyeglasses which they donated to the Lion's Club and printer cartridges, to cell phones which they donated to Verizon's "Call to Protect" program, 6-pack rings, and this year recycled over 7,000 milk jugs.

St. Mary's School – Metamora

St. Mary's School's "Lights for Learning" is a fundraiser that sells compact fluorescent light bulbs. The school held two successful "Lights for Learning" fundraisers last year, selling over 2000 bulbs. They educated both students and the public on compact fluorescent light bulbs, including how they produce less heat, use less energy, come in a variety of different sizes, and why they are more efficient than traditional incandescent bulbs.

Pontiac Township High School – Pontiac

Pontiac High School has won numerous Green Youth Awards in the past, thanks in a large part to their dedicated teacher Paul Ritter, who continually comes up with new environmental projects to educate and involve his students in each year. Mr. Ritter amazingly always seems to choose the "hot topics" before they are "hot topics." This year he and his students started the "Pontiac Prescription Drug Recycling Program." The students researched the topic and gave presentations to local pharmacies, who in turn agreed to allow patients to bring in unused prescription drugs for proper and safe disposal.

Illinois Math & Science Academy - Lorax Environmental Club – Aurora

Illinois Math & Science Academy's Lorax Environmental Club created their "Go Green" project to implement sustainable living in the residential halls and academy buildings, promote environmental awareness and increase contributions to the community. The students reformed the recycling program to better educate the student body on recycling, and re-organized the collection process into single stream recycling in order to become more efficient. They even hosted a "Junkyard Wars" competition which challenged students to create a useful object out of recycled materials. The club also tackled energy conservation creating "Clash of the Halls" a dormitory versus dormitory challenge to see which could save the most energy. They also supported an energy audit of the school, and are researching solar thermal energy as a way to heat water for the school.