

PRESS RELEASE

NEEEA 2007 Awards

On September 15, 2007 environmental educators from throughout New England gathered at Camp Matoaka, Smithfield, Maine for the 41th annual conference of the New England Environmental Education Alliance (NEEEA), *Building Bridges: Creating Change for a Common Good*. Special recognition was awarded to environmental educators from New Hampshire and Massachusetts for outstanding teaching and programs.

Marilyn Wyzga, a Wildlife Educator for the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, received the **NEEEA 2007 Non-formal Environmental Educator Award**. This award recognizes an individual or team working in a non-formal setting such as park, nature center, zoo, or educational setting other than a formal classroom. Since 1991, Marilyn has been a major influence for promoting schoolyard habitat in the United States. Her *Homes for Wildlife* model is utilized by Project WILD coordinators in over ten states. In addition to serving on the NEEEA board, Marilyn's leadership influences the work of the North American Association of Environmental Educators, the board of directors of Wild Ones, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. Over sixty-four schools have been involved with schoolyard habitat projects since the mid 1990's. Marilyn has been instrumental in the development of a summer teacher institute with partners from Project Learning Tree, GLOBE, US Forest Service and Project WET. Marilyn also serves as the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's exhibit designer. Marilyn Wyzga has made a real difference on a regional and national level in not only providing habitat but promoting the use of the outdoors as a place for students to learn and take action.

The **NEEEA 2007 Formal Environmental Educator Award** was presented to Michele ('Chele) Miller, principal, Moultonborough Central School, Moultonborough, NH. 'Chele inspires staff members to learn more about their environment, creating a cycle of positive change that ultimately touches each student at Moultonborough Central School. Student actions result in such school wide activities as Project HOME "Homes for Wildlife in the Schoolyard", school recycling, Earth Day celebrations, a school Environmental Club, and the *Rain for the Sabel and Sahara* pen pal and fundraising effort. 'Chele has participated in courses and staff training along with her staff. At 2005 NHEET Summer Institute "Curriculum Connections through Schoolyard Investigations" she was instrumental in designing interdisciplinary investigations incorporating the new NH Science Frameworks. Currently, she is leading a long term project to enrich, shape and preserve the schoolyard environment. Through her efforts, her staff and students are involved in programs of the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center and the Sargent Camp (Boston University Center for Outdoor Education), "Eyes on Owls" program, winter survival and hiking classes. 'Chele's leadership extends to regional activism, including *Bearcamp Trackers*, the Wonalancet Outdoor Club, and the Tamworth Conservation Commission. It is clear that 'Chele Miller's

extensive knowledge and commitment engage children, teachers, and the community in environmental issues and stewardship.

The NEEEA 2007 Maria Pirie Environmental Program Award was awarded to The Seeds of Solidarity Education Center, Orange, Massachusetts. The mission of Seeds of Solidarity is to provide people of all ages with the inspiration and practical tools to use renewable energy and grow food in their communities. Under the leadership of Director Deb Habib, SOS offers a myriad of environmental, agricultural, and wellness education programs throughout the nine towns in the North Quabbin Reservoir Region. Seeds of Solidarity involves students in growing and eating food from school gardens and greenhouses. In a summer program, *Cultivating Hope, Nourishing Communities*, students learn about local food, cooking, and nutrition. The Seeds of Leadership Garden program is an after-school opportunity for low-income adolescents to learn gardening skills, discuss food issues and choices, and be part of a positive social community. New initiatives of SOS include trash free lunch programs, school composting, and working with a local YMCA summer camp. North Quabbin teachers, school nurses, and leaders of youth organizations can take a graduate-level course offered by SOS to ways to link the newly-formed wellness policies within school districts to the classroom and curricula. In partnership with a family farm component run primarily by Ricky Baruc, SOS runs the Senior Farmshare program. Each September, the annual Garlic and Arts Festival is one more way Seeds of Solidarity reaches out to the community, connecting people, young and old, to the land.

The New England Environmental Education Alliance takes great pleasure in recognizing outstanding teachers and programs for their critical role in teaching environmental stewardship to children, teachers, and communities in our region. To learn more about NEEEA, past honorees, and the six New England state members, visit the web site: <http://www.neeea.org/>.

Paula Coughlin
2007 Awards Chair
New England Environmental Education Alliance