

PRESS RELEASE

New England Environmental Education Alliance 2008 Awards

On October 4, 2008 environmental educators from throughout New England gathered at Boston University's Sargent Center in Hancock, New Hampshire, for the 42nd annual conference of the New England Environmental Education Alliance (NEEEA), *A Journey Home: Fostering Ecologically Centered Communities*. Special recognition was awarded to one outstanding educator and one outstanding program during NEEEA's annual awards ceremony.

The **NEEEA 2008 Formal Educator Award** was presented to **Katherine Bennett**, a teacher at J.R. Briggs Elementary School in Ashburnham, Massachusetts. Kate has integrated real world science and out of doors study into her classes by working "with researchers at the Harvard Forest on a variety of projects focused on forest environments, the hemlock woolly adelgid, and ant ecology." In one project, "Kate involved each of her students in a hands-on ecological field research project called 'Hemlock Trees and the Pesky Pest, the Woolly Adelgid' as part of Harvard Forest's Schoolyard and Ecology Program." "Kate's students collected data on the presence of the woolly adelgid on the school's nature trail, and then used a variety of technology tools, including digital cameras, spreadsheets, and the web to draw conclusions and make recommendations about protecting the school's hemlock trees." Through their involvement in Harvard Forest research on this project and subsequent projects, Kate's students will be prepared to mature into scientifically literate and environmentally aware and responsible citizens.

In addition to her work with Harvard Forest researchers, Kate has also worked since 2002 with the Nashua River Watershed Association's EIC Model – using the Environment in an Integrating Context. Kate participated in the first EIC Model training session and her school and EIC team was chosen as one of the first schools to participate in the national program. Throughout her career, Kate has taken the time and effort to share what she has learned about teaching environmental education with other educators via working with other teachers at her school as well as presenting at many Harvard Forest teacher workshops, and presenting at the Massachusetts Environmental Education Society and the New England Environmental Education Alliance annual conferences.

The **NEEEA 2008 Maria Pirie Environmental Program Award** was presented to **Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory**, Keene, New Hampshire and accepted by **David Moon**, Executive Director. "Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory (AVEO) links volunteers with scientists to gather biological data aimed at improving conservation decision-making and planning in the Ashuelot Valley of southwest New Hampshire. AVEO's community-based citizen science projects create an environmental research and monitoring network that integrates stakeholders on multiple level, including individuals, citizen groups, local non-profit organizations, schools, universities, municipalities, state-level NGO's and state and federal agencies." "AVEO aims to have a measurable, positive impact on local natural resource management and conservation by fostering greater communication and cooperation between educators and professional scientists in its region, and by engaging the public in local conservation research and planning." Projects in which AVEO has engaged citizens in learning first hand about natural science include: Salamander Crossing Brigades, Vernal Pool Identification and Documentation, Mammal Monitoring, Invasive Plant Species

Inventories and Project Nighthawk – the experimental nest patch restoration and population monitoring of an NH state threatened species. Some of AVEO's projects have served as a model for other non-profit organizations and institutions such as the NH Department of Fish and Game and the NH Department of Environmental Services. Further details and information on AVEO's current projects, can be found on their website, <http://keeneweb.org/aveo/>

The New England Environmental Education Alliance is honored to recognize 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, please visit our website: www.neeea.org.

Tamara Whitmore
2008 Awards Chair
New England Environmental Education Alliance