

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First National Environmental Education Week Set for April 10 to 16 **From Nature Centers to Classrooms, Thousands of Teachers and Students** **Prepare for Earth Day through Weeklong Learning Initiative**

Washington, D.C. (April 6, 2005) — More than 350 partner groups – representing leading environmental education organizations, educational institutions, and federal, state and local agencies – have joined with the National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF) to launch a weeklong program to increase environmental education. National Environmental Education Week will be held from April 10 through April 16, 2005, and is supported by Canon U.S.A.

Every year millions of students and educators participate in the annual observance of Earth Day. Recognizing this, NEETF, along with its partners, created National Environmental Education Week to enhance the educational impact of Earth Day through a full week of educational preparation in K-12 classrooms, university campuses and informal settings, such as nature centers, parks, zoos, aquariums, and museums.

According to NEETF surveys conducted by Roper Public Affairs at NOP World, 95 percent of American adults endorse environmental education in schools. At the same time, however, other reports indicate that Americans are not environmentally literate.

“Over the last 35 years, we’ve made progress in environmental education, but we’re far from being an environmentally literate nation,” says Richard C. Bartlett, chairman of the NEETF board of trustees and vice chairman of Mary Kay Holding Corp. “Our surveys over the last five years tell us that average 12th graders [and by extension, average adults] still fall far short of what is considered environmentally literate by anyone’s definition. They cannot answer simple questions like: What fuels most of our electricity? Is average automobile gas mileage getting better or worse? What is the main material filling urban landfills? What is the source of water pollution?”

“NEETF’s goal for National Environmental Education Week is to increase the amount of EE taking place in America’s classrooms and draw educators’ attention to the value and importance of EE for environmental leadership and stewardship,” says Samantha Blodgett, manager of environmental education at NEETF. “By capturing the natural enthusiasm that Earth Day generates in the schools, we hope to build support for and encourage more environmental education.”

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Whether it is a classroom curriculum, a conference, a field trip, a hike or a local festival at a nature center, organizations participating in National Environmental Education Week will celebrate environmental learning. Through www.EEWeek.org, NEETF provides partner organizations with examples of EE activities at the national, state and local level, including:

California – Statewide Desert Nature Festival kicks off EE Week: The Natural Science Collaborative will launch National EE Week with a California Desert Nature Festival. Held at California State University, the festival will include seminars, field trips, free children’s programs, and free resources guides published by the Natural Science Collaborative of the Desert Region. Thousands of educators and students from all over the state of California will participate.

New Jersey – Local YMCA camp hosts three activities for the community: Camp Bernie, a YMCA camp in New Jersey, will hold a special community open house, an environmental education town meeting for students, and an Earth Day community program during national EE Week.

Virginia – Elementary school expands outdoor classroom: Students and faculty at Ball’s Bluff Elementary School in Virginia will complete the following activities during National EE Week: Planting new flowers in the two outdoor classrooms; cleaning out raised flower beds and landscaping around school grounds; planting tree saplings; teaching Project Learning Tree activities; and starting a school-wide recycling project of paper, cardboard, and aluminum.

Tennessee – Nature Center will show students local surroundings: The Warner Park Nature Center in Nashville, Tennessee, will coordinate four wildflower hikes and a day of children’s activities focusing on EE on April 16.

New York – Zoo kicks off Poetry Safari Weekend:

In conjunction with National EE Week and National Poetry Month, the Bronx Zoo Education Department will host its Poetry Safari Weekend beginning on April 16, 2005. Poetry writing activities throughout the Zoo will promote National EE Week to zoo visitors. The weekend culminates a three month long poetry writing contest for 8 to 13 year olds. The contest winners and runner-up will read their entries at the zoo during the weekend of National EE Week. Admission is free during that weekend in celebration of National EE Week.

Texas – State Organization promotes EE with the Envirothon competition:

The Texas State Envirothon/Environmental Institute of Houston has scheduled the Texas Envirothon competition to take place April 10 and April 11, 2005. This competition will be used to promote and kick off National EE Week in the state of Texas and all promotional materials for the Texas Envirothon Competition will include the tag line of “Celebrate National Environmental Education Week – www.EEWeek.org.”

Wyoming – National park launches eTrip for teachers and parents:

Yellowstone National Park in conjunction with the Yellowstone Park Foundation launched a new 75-minute electronic field trip sequel about wolves that covers Native America myths and the world restoration in the park on its dedicated web site supported in part by Canon U.S.A. at www.WindowsIntoWonderland.org with free 24/7 access.

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Already 12 governors have declared the week of April 10 to 16, 2005, as National Environmental Education Week. These states include: Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Wisconsin.

There are well over 500 links from the EEWeek.org web site to individual partner organizations, which also have identified themselves on their respective web sites with the National EE Week sunflower logo. Some of the national organizations include the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Canon Envirothon, Earth Day Network, Education Commission of the States, Environmental Council of the States, GLOBE, Keep American Beautiful, National Association for Interpretation, National Education Association, North American Association for Environmental Education, Student Conservation Association, United Nations–Environment Programme, Yellowstone National Park and Youth Service America. (A complete list of partners at www.EEWeek.org)

The *Weather Channel* also has signed on as a partner to promote National EE Week through *Cable in the Classroom*, which is the education arm of this cable network, through its specialized web site www.weatherclassroom.com. Additionally, *Clearing* and *Green Teacher* magazines will promote National EE Week in their publications.

For information about how to become a partner or to find out about activities or partners in specific areas, visit the National Environmental Education Week's web at www.EEWeek.org or email: blodgett@neetf.org.

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National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF):

Chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1990, the National Environmental Education & Education Training Foundation fosters environmental education or EE to meet critical challenges in America. This private, nonprofit organization is dedicated to increasing public awareness of environmental issues, helping professionals in healthcare, teaching, design, engineering and media become environmentally savvy, and enabling business, government and community leaders to become environmentally informed when making decisions. To this end, NEETF works to create informal and formal connections between policymakers, business, citizen groups and individuals. It provides grants, develops training workshops, strengthens leadership initiatives and supports volunteerism to better health, improve education, promote business profitability and sustain communities. The foundation also has a formal partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to support scientifically sound and effective development of non-regulatory voluntary programs for environmental stewardship.

**First National Environmental Education Week
April 10-16, 2005**

***UW-Stevens Point has a statewide and national
reputation for leadership in Environmental Education***

Listing of UWSP programs involved in Environmental Education:

- **Undergraduate Program and Graduate Program** (UWSP College of Natural Resources)
UWSP undergraduate and graduate programs in environmental education are among the nation's best. Graduates from the undergraduate program are among the best prepared to be interpretive naturalists-environmental educators in parks, nature centers, and environmental centers. Master's degree graduates often earn positions as directors of a nature or environmental centers or information and education specialists with public or private agencies. Key facilities in the program are the **Central Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES)** on Sunset Lake near Amherst Junction, and **Schmeckle Reserve**, located on the UWSP campus.
- **Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE)**
Located in the UWSP College of Natural Resources, the WCEE was established by the state legislature and UW System in 1991 with the statewide mission of applying university philosophies, processes, and resources toward the development, promotion and evaluation of environmental education in Wisconsin K-12 schools. Following is a listing of WCEE programs in environmental education:
 - **Environmental Education Resources Library** (4th Floor, UWSP Library)
 - **Environmental Education Network**
An association of schools and cooperating statewide agencies dedicated to promoting environmental education in Wisconsin.
 - **Extended Masters Program**
Professional development program for K-12 teachers
 - **Global Environmental Teachings (GET)**
A non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of global environmental literacy. The goals of GET are accomplished through innovative educational programs using a combination of computer technology and travel courses to elevate awareness and knowledge about environmental education among diverse populations.
 - **Governor's High School Conference on the Environment**
Annual event to share information on current environmental issues, provide a forum where students and teachers from all over Wisconsin can network and share ideas, empower students with tools to solve environmental dilemmas, and provide career and skill-building workshops.
 - **Learning, Experiences, and Activities in Forestry (LEAF)**
Statewide program that initiates and facilitates the development, dissemination, implementation, and evaluation of forestry education within Wisconsin Schools.
 - **Wisconsin K12 Energy Education Program (KEEP)**
Statewide program to improve and increase energy education in Wisconsin's K-12 schools.
- **Environmental Education & Training Partnership (EETAP)**
Funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and located at UWSP, EETAP is a national leader in the delivery of environmental education training to

a wide array of education professionals. EETAP is committed to ensuring that ethnically diverse and low-income communities benefit from and actively participate in education that advances student learning and environmental literacy.

- **National Environmental Education Advancement Project (NEEAP)**

A member of the EETAP partnership, NEEAP supports the development and expansion of quality environmental education programs through a variety of state and local capacity building efforts. Many NEEAP efforts encourage the development and implementation of comprehensive environmental education programs at the state and local levels.

Noteworthy accomplishments of the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE):

- Established with a base budget of \$130,000 and 2.5 positions. This initial investment is leveraged through grants, contracts, and partnerships to an annual operating budget of over one million dollars and 40 full and part time positions.
- Administers and houses the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board which has distributed over one million dollars in program grants to schools, municipalities, universities, environmental centers, businesses, etc. Over the last ten years, hundreds of educational programs around the state have been started or enriched by these funds.
- Maintains one of the largest collections of EE curriculum resources in the nation. Over 3,000 resources are catalogued and circulated through the UWSP library: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/library/index.htm>
- Developed the largest MS degree in natural resources program for teachers in the nation. It is offered during summers as a non-GPR revenue based program. It has graduated over 120 students with another 50 presently enrolled: <http://www.uwsp.edu/natres/msnree/>
- Developed and is offering nine completely on-line graduate courses for teachers in EE: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/courses.htm>
- Developed and is offering over 50 environmental education graduate courses around the state servicing over 700 students per year.
- Expanded faculty resources by training and mentoring over 20 adjunct faculty to offer and develop graduate courses for teachers around the state.
- Developed and facilitates an environmental education information exchange network with over 1000 K-12 schools participating since its inception.
- Established and facilitates annual “Governor’s High School Conference on the Environment,” having served over 2,000 youth over the last ten years: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/youthconference/index.htm>
- National leader in EE curriculum development with model programs in K-12 energy education (<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/wcee/keep/>) and forestry education (<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/leaf/>)
- Received extensive recognition for its experience in evaluation of EE program and curriculum development; WCEE faculty have served in EE research leadership roles at the state and national level.
- Conducted the most comprehensive assessment of K-12 student environmental literacy ever done in a state or the nation, in collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction.
- Has been a leader in identifying and implementing state standards in K-12 science and environmental education.
- Awards -- beyond over a dozen state and national awards to individual faculty and staff, the WCEE as a program has received “program excellence” awards from the North American Association for Environmental Education, Wisconsin Conservation Congress, Wisconsin Association for Environmental

Education, the Midwest Renewable Energy Association, and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.