



LOCAL EDUCATORS HONORED WITH OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARD

Five Rivers MetroParks awards those who encourage environmental education.

DAYTON, OH (March 30, 2017) – [Five Rivers MetroParks](#) has named the winners of its third annual [OUTstanding Teacher Award](#), created to honor Dayton-area teachers who engage students with the outdoors:

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- **Rising Star (less than 10 years):** John Huston, [Nicholas Residential Treatment Center School](#)
Huston used his extensive educational background and experience with the sciences, conservation and natural resource preservation to create a unique classroom experience for his students. After just two years in his position, Huston has transformed the school's grounds into a nature-based classroom where students now participate in various science and conservation-based projects, including the [Monarch Project](#), creek studies and cultivating a native grasslands habitat.
- **Leader (10 to 20 years):** Mary McKnight, [Thurgood Marshall STEM High School](#)
McKnight spearheaded a school-wide effort to create an outdoor classroom that would enhance the academic goals of various content areas, including foreign language, literature, science, math and language arts. Under McKnight's direction, students and teachers collaborated to create an urban garden. As part of their classroom activities, students grew food, conducted soil testing, recorded nature observations and crafted molds for pavers for the school garden.
- **Lifetime Achievement (more than 20 years):** Lisa Simmons, St. Helen School
A physical education teacher and organizer of St. Helen School's Eco Club, Simmons has a passion for outdoor activity and nature exploration. Simmons was instrumental in setting up and maintaining the school's garden, which is a designated Monarch Way Station and has received honors from the [Wild Ohio](#) program. Students in Eco-Club make bird houses, plant seeds and remove weeds, in addition to taking field trips to learn about local wildlife and conduct stream studies.

Awardees were honored at the [Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside Summit](#) on Saturday, March 11, at [Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark](#). Winning teachers received an award package containing:

- Kit with plants selected for their schools
- Environmental Education Council of Ohio membership (includes money to use toward the 101 Conference held at Camp Kern the first weekend of October)
- A one-year membership to the [Cox Arboretum Foundation](#) and a field trip to [Cox Arboretum MetroPark](#) for their students (includes transportation)
- Outdoor educational materials to assist in connecting students to the environment

The award honors teachers who provide students with outdoor, environmental experiences that inspire interest in and build positive attitudes about nature. [Applications](#) for the next year's awards will be available this fall.

ABOUT FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

[Celebrating more than 50 years](#) of preserving green space and natural areas, [Five Rivers MetroParks](#) is a nationally renowned [park system](#) composed of natural area parks, [gardens](#), high-quality [river corridors](#), urban parks and a network of [recreation trails](#). Five Rivers MetroParks [protects](#) the region's natural heritage and provides [outdoor experiences](#) that inspire a personal connection with nature. [Educational](#) programs and [recreational](#) opportunities are offered year-round for all ages. Five Rivers MetroParks is accredited by the [Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies](#). To learn more [about](#) Five Rivers MetroParks, log onto [www.metroparks.org](#) or call 937-275-PARK (7275).

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