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For immediate release

Parks Naturalist Wins \$10,000 Award from National Science Teachers Association

Milwaukee, WI (April 27, 2016) — Milwaukee County Parks announced today that the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) has presented Bev Bryant, a naturalist at Wehr Nature Center, the \$10,000 SeaWorld/Busch Gardens Outstanding Environmental Educator Award.

As the largest professional organization in the world promoting excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning, the 55,000-member NSTA recognizes extraordinary K-12 teachers, professors, principals, and science educators for their outstanding achievements in science education.

“We are so proud to honor Ms. Bryant as she helps to inspire the next generation of informed citizens, scientists, engineers, and innovators who can embrace all that science can offer,” said NSTA President Carolyn Hayes. “We congratulate Ms. Bryant for her lifelong commitment to science education and for her innovative and creative approach to teaching our students science.”

Bryant, an interpretive naturalist with Wehr for more than 20 years, received the award for her work at the grassroots level to protect and preserve the environment. The award was presented earlier this month at a special ceremony at NSTA’s National Conference on Science Education in Nashville.

Through Wehr’s partnership with Ben Franklin Elementary School and the Franklin Public Schools, Bryant developed a four-year project to transform the school’s degraded oak woods into a healthy forest and outdoor learning lab. Since 2012, over 250 fifth- and sixth-graders have removed buckthorn and litter, identified woodland plants and animals, researched the history of the forest, made electronic field guides and a website, built bird houses, and planned and created a nature trail. Students have learned how to ask good questions, take measurements, share ideas, solve problems, and make a positive change in their world.

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Benefits may begin in the woods but expand to the larger community. An 80-percent reduction in invasive plants and the resulting increase in sunlight has allowed wildflowers to reappear and new growth to emerge on the old oaks. The forest is now open and accessible to students and neighbors, littering has decreased, and middle-school outdoor-club membership has surged.

Bryant will use the \$10,000 award to train and mentor teachers in integrating the school's forest into the curriculum of each grade level.

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