



THE WREA FOUNDATION

The Charitable Arm of the
Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association

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RELEASE IMMEDIATELY

SANDHILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL "DISCOVERY STATIONS" PROJECT

WINS WISCONSIN RETIRED EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION AWARD

Stoughton, WI – The Sandhill Elementary School and Kindergarten Teacher Lindsay Ott have been awarded \$2,000 by the Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association (WREA) Foundation. The award was given for the school's "Discovery Stations" project.

As a team, they have set their mission to incorporate play into the classroom while maintaining the academic rigor. They have done that through Discovery Stations. Students have the opportunity to visit the STEM stations twice a week and the literacy and art stations twice a week. All of the stations are tied to the learning targets and monthly themes. The stations use play to develop fine motor skills, strengthen literacy skills, and enable student creativity. The skills such as problem solving, team work, listening, etc., that the students are learning through Discovery Stations will benefit them throughout their entire lives and are therefore essential to their success.

Ms. Ott explained, "Our students love retelling stories we have read with puppets, painting with new materials, testing out their senses in our sensory table, building habitats or ramps out of blocks, and using their engineering skills to build seasonal structures. At the beginning of each month, students are given open-ended expectations of how to engage with each station. The Sandhill Kindergarten team intentionally sets up these open-ended expectations in order to enable our students to use their creativity in play to transform the stations throughout the month."

They sincerely believe that dedicating time in the school day for play is what students need to be successful. Currently, they have exhausted their budget for stations. The grant will help them to purchase items to continue to run the engaging and meaningful station the rest of the school year.

RIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL “project wild child” PROJECT

WINS WISCONSIN RETIRED EDUCATORS’ ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION 2ND PLACE AWARD

Rio, WI – Rio Elementary School and Kindergarten Teacher, Sarah Noguee, have been awarded \$250.00 by the Wisconsin Retired Educators’ Association (WREA) Foundation. The award was given for the school’s “Project Wild Child” project.

Project Wild Child is a joint Early Learning and Kindergarten venture to provide the students with the opportunity to interact and connect with nature on a regular basis; to grant them permission to learn through play; to help them establish their place in the natural world; to indulge natural curiosity and turn it into a love for learning; and to nurture 21st century skills outside the classroom walls. Project Wild Child endeavors to protect the students right to play and allow them to learn math, science, literacy, and social skills through play experiences in the forest.

Ms. Noguee explained, “Project Wild Child consists of weekly visits to our school forest, located 8 miles from the school building. Adults facilitate the children’s learning through open-ended questions, stories, music, art, and the like. Sticks, acorns, leaves and other natural treasures are used for math manipulatives, science experiments, and dramatic play props.”

Their primary goal is to instill in students a lifetime love of learning. In opening this world to all students, they empower all students to view themselves as scientists and mathematicians, eliminating bias in these fields. The immediate benefits to the students include the capacity to solve problems with peers without adult intervention, less reliance on adult direction during unstructured times, and the ability to cooperate to complete a task. The grant will be used for transportation expenses to the school forest and supplies.

The financial award is part of an annual “Challenge Award” program sponsored by the WREA Foundation. It recognizes ten schools each year, in each of the five statewide regional districts that comprise WREA. From year to year, the awards are rotated from elementary schools, to middle schools, to high schools, every third year.

Sandhill Elementary School (Stoughton) is one of five innovative elementary school projects to be awarded \$2,000 this year, for a total of \$10,000 donated by the WREA Foundation. The other projects awarded were Algoma School District (Algoma), Park Falls & Glidden Elementary Schools (Park Falls), Oaklawn Elementary School (Menomonie), and The School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies (Fox Lake).

In addition to the first-place winners, five second place winners were awarded \$250.00 each for their innovative projects. The schools include: Lakeview Elementary School (Neenah), Oostburg Elementary School (Oostburg), Whitehall Memorial Elementary School (Whitehall), Forest Ridge Elementary School (Oak Creek), and Rio Elementary School (Rio).

The WREA and the WREA Foundation are independent, non-profit organizations representing more than 10,000 retired educators across the state of Wisconsin. Their primary focus is to support and protect the retirement interests and needs of its members, and to advocate for public schools. Both organizations are located at 6405 Century Avenue, Suite 201, Middleton, WI 53562.

WREA, which was organized in 1951, is a statewide association of more than 10,000 members and 62 local units. It is recognized for protecting the public pension fund, promoting public education, and providing member benefits. With a central office in Middleton, WREA maintains a strong lobbying presence to represent the views of the retired educational community.

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