



THE WREA FOUNDATION

The Charitable Arm of the
Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association

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RELEASE IMMEDIATELY

THE SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES "WORMS ATE MY GARBAGE: VERMICOMPOSTING TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT" PROJECT

WINS WISCONSIN RETIRED EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION AWARD

Fox Lake, WI – The School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies and Teacher Becky Panzer have been awarded \$2,000 by the Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association (WREA) Foundation. The award was given for the school's "Worms Ate My Garbage: Vermicomposting to Improve the Environment" project.

This is an innovative process which reduces the amount of food waste entering landfills. Explorations with vermicomposting expanded student knowledge in mathematics by weighing and recording the amount of waste being put into the vermicomposting bin, observing and counting how long it took for the food waste to disappear, and studying the worms through comparing and contrasting approaches.

Ms. Panzer explained, "The kindergarten, first, second, and third grade classes at The School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies (SAGES) have been improving the environment for our students and community through vermicomposting, an innovative process which reduces the amount of food waste entering landfills. Explorations with vermicomposting expanded student knowledge in mathematics by weighing and recording the amount of waste being put into the vermicomposting bin, observing and counting how long it took for the food waste to disappear, and studying the worms through comparing and contrasting approaches."

After two years, they have vermicomposting happening in grades K-6 at SAGES encompassing all 125 students in the building. Word is getting out into the school district and community about this vermicomposting project. Educating the community has also begun. This year, the 3rd grade class educated the community during the winter music program with hopes to further educate the community.

Their goal is to create a healthier Earth in which to learn and grow. They will use the funds from the grant to purchase much needed tools to expand the cross-curricular learning with the vermicomposting bin.

FOREST RIDGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL “STUDENT MEDIA CLUB” PROJECT

WINS WISCONSIN RETIRED EDUCATORS’ ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION 2ND PLACE AWARD

Oak Creek, WI – Forest Ridge Elementary School and 3rd Grade Teacher, Lauren Feuling, have been awarded \$250.00 by the Wisconsin Retired Educators’ Association (WREA) Foundation. The award was given for the school’s “Student Media Club” project.

This is a club that explores the various forms of media in the world and how we can use them to communicate information with others. The main focus of the club is to write and produce a news broadcast video for the entire school to view. The videos help to build the community of the school with not only the students, but with their families as well.

Ms. Feuling explained, “We are in the 2nd year of Student Media Club and have 15 students who meet bi weekly. Students have created blogs, brain break videos, PBIS training videos, and reviews of books featured in the school library. Students are responsible to research events happening in and around our school and write a news report which will be recorded and edited by students in the club.”

The videos are a great way for all students to be introduced to every teacher, no matter what grade they are in. It puts a face to the name and students are able to get acquainted with every teacher. Because of this, the videos help to build the community of the school with not only the students, but their families as well.

As the club continues to grow, they would like to increase the quality of the videos and the ability to share them in order to better develop that sense of community in the school. With more and better recording equipment, they will be able to reach more students more efficiently in order to help build a successful future together.

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.

The School for Agricultural and Environmental Studies (Fox Lake) 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 Sandhill Elementary School (Stoughton).

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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