

Rhode Island Wild Plant Society

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rhode Island Wild Plant Society Announces Winner of 2008 Educational Grant

The Rhode Island Wild Plant Society is pleased to announce that the annual \$500 grant has been awarded to **Doris E. Lawson**, a nationally board certified teacher at the **Potter-Burns Elementary School** on Newport Avenue, Pawtucket.

The Potter-Burns School is in the process of building an outdoor classroom in front of the school to maximize learning experiences for students in the Life Science curriculum, grades K-6. Since many students live in crowded neighborhoods with little access and understanding of nature and the powerful negative effects of industrialization, the faculty feels it imperative that inner city students develop an appreciation for the world and understand the interdependence of people and their environment.

With the grant money, Potter-Burns will plant indigenous vegetation in the outdoor classroom in order to immerse students in the study of native and wild plant life. The funds will provide plants designated to attract butterflies, birds, to study insects, pollination, spores, native biomes and plant cells.

Last school year the entire faculty developed a Life Science curriculum that integrates all grade span equivalencies for Life Science and grade level expectancies for reading, mathematics and writing. In addition, Potter-Burns has begun to build the necessary infrastructure to support the garden. They have secured a service grant from the Children's Garden Network that funded a master gardener to work with students and teachers. Together they have developed a master plan that reflects the students' vision of a children's garden, The master plan maps out laboratory areas that correlate with curriculum needs. The laboratory areas will be readily accessible and provide hands-on observation and experimentation, as well as provide exciting learning activities. Together students will sharpen their observation skills, ask questions about the environment, set up experiments, gather, analyze and report data.

Students, parents and the community are engaged in the maintenance of the school garden. The PTO organizes students and parents to clean the garden in the spring. A few bushes and plants were planted last year, funded by a donation, and a major cleanup and pruning were done by a group of about 25 volunteers the year before in an area that was overgrown with bushes and weeds and littered with debris.

As you go by Potter-Burns Elementary School and notice new plant life such as *Echinacea purpurea* (purple coneflower) emerging forth in the new outdoor classroom, offer Doris Lawson and the students and faculty of Potter-Burns School your congratulations and best wishes – as does the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society. Congratulations!