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**Cherie Wyatt of Burlington Named Project Learning Tree®
2008 Outstanding Educator of the Year**

Washington, D.C. – Project Learning Tree® (PLT), the environmental education program of the American Forest Foundation, has announced its 2008 National Outstanding Educators of the Year.

Cherie Wyatt of Burlington, CO, was one of five educators selected nationwide for their commitment to environmental education, exemplary use of PLT, and exceptional teaching skills. She will be honored at PLT's 22nd International Coordinators' Conference, May 13–16, in Jackson, MS.

Wyatt teaches 7th grade life science and 8th grade physical science at Burlington Middle School. Her students consistently score above the state average on the science portion of the CSAP tests. Wyatt infuses PLT and other environmental education materials into her teaching, often taking her students outside to reinforce classroom learning. For example, students collect insects, compare plant adaptations, or observe birds in the school's wildlife area. Last year, her students helped plant milkweed in a vacant lot fronting the school to create a habitat for monarch butterflies. Wyatt initiated a now-annual water festival for her students in which 8th graders help teach younger students about water resources. Wyatt leads all her 8th grade students through five activities, after which they choose one activity each to present to small groups of 5th, 6th, and 7th grade students.

Wyatt also has a strong commitment to helping other teachers. She organizes and presents staff professional development workshops to fellow educators, as well as to pre-service teachers at the University of Northern Colorado. She introduces them to high quality environmental education materials and teaching practices, and arranges speakers for general science, elementary science, and secondary science clusters, to increase teachers' understanding of ecological concepts and their ability to incorporate related activities into the classroom.

“Leadership is one of Cherie's strengths,” said Shawna Crocker, Colorado PLT State Coordinator with the Colorado State Forest Service. “Cherie strives to improve both the environment and science teaching methodology, leading by example and by providing professional development opportunities for others.”

Four years ago, Wyatt helped create a program for teachers called the High Plains TEN (Teaching Environmental-Science Naturally), which demonstrates how to make better use of local resources and experts to improve student learning. Each year a different theme is chosen for a four-day, two-credit class that

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introduces teachers to speakers (foresters, game wardens, soil conservationists, park rangers, scientists, or policy makers), gives them field experiences at nearby sites (school wildlife areas, ranches, or nature preserves), and provides them with environmental education materials, mentoring and other support to help them integrate environmental education into their curriculum.

“Cherie always stretches her boundaries and helps others to do the same, either deliberately or by example,” said Linda Groat, Education Specialist with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. “Her commitment to environmental education is demonstrated through her passion and professionalism.”

“Cherie Wyatt exemplifies how a great teacher can inspire students and other educators,” said Kathy McGlaufflin, Director of Project Learning Tree and Senior Vice President of Education for the American Forest Foundation. “PLT is known for quality environmental education because teachers like her use PLT in classrooms and outdoors to help students learn about the world around them, their place within it, and their responsibility to it.”

Wyatt is an active member of the National Science Teachers Association, the National Wildlife Federation, the Colorado Association of Science Teachers (who recognized her for Excellence in Teaching at the middle school level), the Colorado Association of Biology Teachers, and the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education. Over the years, she has held various leadership positions and presented at many state and regional conferences.

In addition to attending the PLT International Coordinators’ Conference, May 13-16, in Jackson, MS, Wyatt is invited to attend the World Forestry Center’s International Educators’ Institute, July 14-19, in Portland, OR.

Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is the environmental education program of the American Forest Foundation. . PLT provides educators with comprehensive environmental education curriculum resources that can be integrated into lesson plans for all grades and subject areas. PLT teaches students “how to think, not what to think” about complex environmental issues, and helps students learn the skills they need to make sound choices about the environment.

Developed in 1976, PLT has an international network of more than 500,000 trained educators using PLT materials that cover the total environment. The American Forest Foundation, a nonprofit conservation and education organization, works for healthy forests, quality environmental education, and informed decision-making about our communities and our world. The Colorado State Forest Service and Colorado State University co-sponsor PLT in Colorado.

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