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**Rob Marohn of Duluth 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.

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

Marohn teaches science and language arts to 5th graders at Bay View Elementary School in Duluth. He was first introduced to PLT while in college and now uses PLT activities with his students every week.

On Friday, February 29, Marohn will present a session at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' School Forest Conference at the Cloquet Forestry Center. He will share with other teachers from across Minnesota his use of PLT and how both during-school and after-school events have rallied the community, teachers, and students around the Bay View School Forest.

Marohn is a tireless advocate for the Bay View School Forest and is its main steward. Over the past four years, he has worked with teachers, students, school administrators, parents, and the community to create trails, outdoor classrooms, teaching stations, and other improvements in the forest. He encourages all teachers to use the forest site and has helped provide training for fellow teachers on how to teach in an outdoor setting to enhance classroom learning, including a two-day PLT "How to Teach in Your School Forest" workshop.

"Rob is a visionary," said fellow teacher Julie Short, who noted the school's neighboring forest was an unused resource until Marohn came to Bay View. "His passion for students learning in the outdoors has spread throughout our school and community. But he not only dreams about what he'd like to see for students in our forest, he collaborates with others and works hard to make those dreams realities."

Marohn uses PLT in two programs he created for students: Forest Buddies, in which 5th graders take younger students into the forest and conduct PLT activities, and the after-school Bay View School Forest Club that, with the help of a naturalist and others, offers activities focusing on recreation, education, and conservation with different grade levels each month.

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Cont. pg 2. - Marohn

“Rob has earned the support of parents and community leaders for quality environmental education and directly connects teachers and students to the resources they need, not just at his school, but throughout the Proctor district” said Laura Duffey, Minnesota PLT State Coordinator at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. “By engaging both adults and children in the school forest and environmental education activities, Rob is helping them develop a love of the outdoors and life-long environmental stewardship.”

Marohn’s students have made several presentations to the Proctor and Duluth City Councils on issues affecting forests, watershed health, and land development decisions. Marohn himself is currently working with the State of Minnesota, St. Louis County, and City of Duluth to secure an additional 90 acres for the Proctor School District for use as a school forest.

Marohn has secured a large collection of equipment, for example, water sampling and sap collecting, as well as clothing, including full classroom sets of rubber boots and snowshoes, and lesson plans. In addition to organizing winter camping trips into the school forest with kids and parents, for the past three years, Marohn has taken 5th grade students and parents on a three-day, two-night program at the Audubon Center in North Woods.

Marohn was appointed by the mayor to the City of Duluth Tree Commission. He is also a board member of the Superior Hiking Trail Association and Hartley Nature Center, and is a City of Duluth Parks and Recreation volunteer. Marohn has helped edit several curriculum guides used statewide, including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ Minnesota School Forest Handbook. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Education: Natural Science and Environmental Education degree at Hamline University.

“Rob Marohn 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 him use PLT in classrooms and outdoors to help students learn about the world around them, their place within it, and their responsibility to it.”

In addition to attending the PLT International Coordinators’ Conference, May 13-16, in Jackson, MS, Marohn 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 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources-Division of Forestry is the PLT state sponsor in Minnesota.

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