



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Ina Ahern of Plymouth 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.

Ina Ahern of Plymouth 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.

Ahern teaches chemistry, physics, and environmental science at Plymouth Regional High School. With a passion for and commitment to the environment, she has made local issues a large part of the curriculum through an integrated, place-based, and hands-on approach. For example, each year her students conduct field studies on the upper Pemi and Baker watersheds--collecting and analyzing data, GIS mapping, learning land use history, and making presentations about their findings to the community. Students compare their data with data collected in previous years, some of which dates back as far as 1988. Through this community investigation, Ahern's students become very familiar with their local rivers and associated watersheds, as well as the factors that influence their health.

A high school science teacher for 25 years, Ahern often makes presentations to other educators about how to incorporate the local environment into teaching. In 2006, she was one of a pioneer group of teachers to participate in the yearlong program A Forest for Every Classroom, cosponsored by PLT, the USDA Forest Service, and Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest and has since formally presented her experiences to incoming teachers.

“Ina is a teacher who embodies the ethic of lifelong learning and works very hard to foster this love of learning in her students,” said Jennifer Werda, a fellow Plymouth science teacher who was mentored by Ahern. “For Ina, the outdoors is an extension of the classroom, and studying the natural environment and the local community is a key strategy for bringing academics to life.”

“Ina used her Forest For Every Classroom experience to strengthen the field-study project her students conduct on their local watershed each year and to build ties between the school, its community, and local resource people,” said Esther Cowles, Executive Director of New Hampshire Project Learning Tree. “This is a great reflection of how PLT materials are best used.”

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Cont. pg 2. - Ahern

“Ina Ahern exemplifies how a great teacher can inspire students and other educators,” said Kathy McGlaufflin, Director of Project Learning Tree and Senior Vice President, Center for Environmental Learning at 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.”

Ahern is committed to making environmental education a part of New Hampshire schools. Last year, she participated in a summer institute to sequence and vertical scope PLT activities (along with four other environmental education program materials) to New Hampshire’s science frameworks for grades K-12. She also participates in the Merrimack River Watershed Ecology program and collaborates with the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest to adapt their biogeochemical forest ecosystem research for the high school classroom.

In addition to attending the PLT International Coordinators’ Conference, May 13-16, in Jackson, MS, Ahern 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. New Hampshire Project Learning Tree coordinates PLT activities throughout the state.*

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