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Six elementary classrooms win Audubon award

Six classrooms at three Everett Public Schools elementary schools are beneficiaries of the Pilchuck Audubon Society Classroom Conservation Awards this year.

Two View Ridge teachers, Heidi Davis and John Arbuckle, will be working together to leverage the value of their joint grant. Ms. Davis and Mr. Arbuckle's combination second and third grade classes will produce puppet shows describing environmental problems. They will research what those problems are by visiting a neighborhood environmental park and using the scientific method to follow the questions that result from those visits.

Ira Siebert's View Ridge fifth-grade students will focus on ways to solve recycling challenges. They will design and produce fliers that clearly show fellow classmates what is and what is not recyclable and what each student can do to help the recycling process at school and at home. They also plan to produce CDs that other teachers can use in their classrooms. The \$250 grant money will be used to build permanent recycling stations in the View Ridge lunchroom.

Dolly Gamlyn at Woodside Elementary will buy materials so that her second-graders can study the life cycle of butterflies. Each student will have an opportunity to take part raising and caring for caterpillars and ultimately the lovely butterflies that emerge from them. This is not the first time Ms. Gamlyn's students have closely studied butterflies. Students under her watch have successfully raised two generations of Painted Lady butterflies, "and we are well on our way to a third generation," said Gamlyn. "This will lead to a deeper understanding of life cycles and some discussion about natural selection."

Penny Creek's third-graders, under the guidance of teacher Kathi MacDonald, will keep "Nature Journals" and use "First Field Guides" this year. In the process, the budding scientists will apply the scientific method of recording observations. Kindergarten students at Penny Creek will benefit from the project as well – when Ms. MacDonald's third-grade students share their journals and observations with the younger students.

Penny Creek highly capable students in Laurie Miller's third- and fourth-grade classrooms, working with Technology Specialist Wanda Hill, will podcast messages to the community. Using a Web site to broadcast Washington state environmental issues, students will distribute their messages to an audience beyond the school walls. Topics they plan to cover include recycling, littering, taking care of the trails, being careful with campfires and of the state's water and salmon.

The local Audubon branch grants these awards to instill in young students a sense of the need to conserve and protect natural resources. The Pilchuck branch thus makes funds available for classroom projects that focus on conservation lessons. Traditionally, 10 such awards for \$250 each are awarded to Snohomish County public or private school teachers. This year, the applicant pool was so strong, 11 awards were given across the county. "We are delighted to have so many of those awards right here in Everett Public Schools," said Superintendent Carol Whitehead. "The teachers who have won these awards are doing amazing things in their classrooms to weave the lessons of reading, writing, math, science and even drama and technology into real-life experiences that emphasize everyone's responsibility to treasure and protect the natural world around us."