



# Minnesota Project Learning Tree Educator Update

December 2009

*"From there to here, and here to there, funny things are everywhere." - Dr. Seuss*

E-newsletter for educators who have attended a Project Learning Tree workshop

## NEWS

### National PLT Launches GreenSchools!

Let your class investigate



how your school building uses energy, using 5 "investigations" (5 for elementary; 5 for middle/high). These investigations are a great way to correlate to math and science standards. Go to [www.pltgreenschools.org/](http://www.pltgreenschools.org/) You'll have to create a username and password, but it's easy and worth it!

### Minnesota PLT Teacher Wins National Award

Minnesota PLT/ WET/ WILD teacher and workshop facilitator, **Kari Dombrovski**, a teacher from Talahi Elementary in Kimball, won the Presidential Award as an Outstanding Science, Math, and Engineering Teacher. As part of her award, Kari will get \$10,000 from the National Science



*Yay, Kari!  
We're proud of you!*

Foundation and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. [Press Release](#)

### Minn. PLT Early Childhood Supplement Correlated to Head Start Child Development Indicators

Thanks to Char Parsons and Sheryl Wennemark for doing the hard work. The correlations are posted on [www.mndnr.gov/plt/earlychildhood.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/plt/earlychildhood.html)

### Minnesota Conservation Corps has Spring and Summer Jobs for Youth 15-18 years Youth Outdoors:

Spend 12 hours a week after school doing conservation and community service projects. Applicants must live in St. Paul, in a household at or below 80% the median income. Deadline: February 5, 2010.

#### Summer Youth Program:

Travel Minnesota to complete environmental projects for 8 weeks during the summer. Deadline to apply: April 23, 2010.

[www.conservationcorps.org](http://www.conservationcorps.org)

651-209-9900

[youth@conservationcorps.org](mailto:youth@conservationcorps.org)

## **CONFERENCES & EVENTS**

**Minn. Assn. for Environmental Education (MAEE)**

**March 12-13, 2010**

**Rutger's Sugar Lake Lodge, Grand Rapids**

[www.naaee.org/maee](http://www.naaee.org/maee)



*PLT teacher and facilitator, Andrea Swanson, leads a nature journaling class at the 2009 MAEE conference.*

## **GRANTS**

### **PLT GreenWorks Grant Update**

The National PLT office will temporarily suspend the GreenWorks grant program in 2010. The national program intends to reinstate the program as soon as they can.

If you applied for a grant due last October 30, you will get notice of your award by the end of January.

### **Health & PE Grants and Resources**

<http://www.grantwrangler.com/>

(click on Health & PE)

Need sports equipment, nutrition grants, or resources for outdoor programs? Browse through the most current health and physical education (PE) grants and awards for your school or nonprofit.

### **Tell AF&PA about how you recycle and win \$2,000.**

The AF&PA Recycling Awards recognize outstanding business, community, and school recycling efforts.

<http://paperrecyclingawards.org>

Entry deadline: **February 9, 2010**

### **Toyota TAPESTRY Grants for K-12 Science Teachers**

[www.nsta.org/pd/tapestry](http://www.nsta.org/pd/tapestry)

These grants are sponsored by Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc., and administered by NSTA. Grants up to \$10,000 are available to K–12 science teachers for innovative projects that enhance environmental science and literacy education in their school and/or school district over a one-year period.

**Deadline: January 18, 2010**

## **TEACHER THRIFTIES: Free and cheap stuff**

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### **PLT Student Pages – In Spanish**

You already have the book in English. Get a book of student pages in Spanish by contacting the national PLT office at 202-463-2462 or [information@plt.org](mailto:information@plt.org). FREE.

**Green Your School Guide** From Earth Day Network.  
300 pages. [www.earthday.net/greenyourschool](http://www.earthday.net/greenyourschool)

### **Free DNR Poster: “Stop Invasive Species”**

From the Minnesota DNR. 24” x 24,” 2-sided.

Order from the DNR Info Center: [info@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:info@dnr.state.mn.us)



*Free DNR poster features buckthorn, tansy, knapweed, and others on Minnesota’s “Least Wanted” list.*

### **New High School Curriculum: Citizen Climate**

[www.willstegerfoundation.org/index.php/programs/k-12-education-program/citizen-climate-curriculum](http://www.willstegerfoundation.org/index.php/programs/k-12-education-program/citizen-climate-curriculum)

## **RECOMMENDED**

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### **Recommended Books for Your Nature-Themed Reading Corner**

Nice literature lists for students and teachers

[www.mndnr.gov/education/ee/examples.html#nature](http://www.mndnr.gov/education/ee/examples.html#nature)

[www.eeweek.org/resources/green\\_reading.htm](http://www.eeweek.org/resources/green_reading.htm)

**Watch a Pollution Plume** Fantastic Web site on human impacts on a watershed.

<http://new.coolclassroom.org/adventures/explore/plume>

## **Project Learning Tree PRESCHOOL CORNER**

### **Featured Winter Activity: Winter Solstice House**

**Levels:** Gr. K – 3

**Subjects:** Science, Math, Language Arts

**Activity submitted by:** Marlee Meshbesh, St. David's Center for Child Development, [marleeruns@yahoo.com](mailto:marleeruns@yahoo.com)

**Activity Objectives:** Students will feed and observe evidence of winter animals who visit a house of seeds made by the students. Students can graph the number of visitors and amount of food consumed by animals.

**Length:** An hour of prep time to build the house form and prepare it for decorating.

Lead-in information about winter solstice and feeding animals during the winter months can be as short or detailed as your age-group requires. For preschoolers, it's about 20 minutes of information spread out over a week prior to assembling the house. Older children could actually help with most of the prep work!

#### **Materials needed:**

Cardboard to build a house form

Solid vegetable shortening, like Crisco (1 can)

2 boxes of graham crackers

1 container of corn meal

1 jar peanut butter

Assorted bird seed and nuts

#### **Disciplines addressed:**

Science (animals in winter, food sources, hibernation)

Language arts (use books recommended in MN-PLT early childhood supplement or in the PLT, WET, or WILD guides, many of which tie into this unit.)

Math (Once the house is placed outside, take photos to document the house or have your class visually inspect the house on a regular basis. Graph what was eaten and how many days it takes for everything to be consumed.)

#### **Activity overview:**

We used to make a typical gingerbread house with lots of frosting and candy. Although the kids loved the activity, it was wasteful because at the end of the season, the house would be thrown away. We came up with this idea, which the kids love just as much. We're not focused on candy but on helping critters.

For pre-schoolers: We spend a week talking about what happens to animals in the winter, who hibernates and who doesn't, where animals find food and shelter in the winter, what kinds of animals do children see in their own yards in the winter. The culmination of the topic is decorating the winter solstice house and bringing it out to the woods. After that we check it every day to see if there are footprints in the snow and to determine if things are being nibbled. *Continued, next page.*



### ***Winter Solstice House (continued)***

We have to do all the prep work of cutting out the cardboard house form, hot gluing it together, mixing the “glue” and putting the initial layer of graham crackers on the form. Older children could do some or all of these tasks.

**Glue recipe:** 1 can of solid vegetable shortening, 1 container of corn meal (it comes in a container like oatmeal), 1 jar peanut butter. Mix all the ingredients in a large bowl to combine well. Set aside. *Warning: if you have peanut or nut allergies, omitting the peanut butter from the recipe doesn't make this project any safer because all bird food is cross-contaminated by nuts and peanuts.*

Build the cardboard house form. Cover the form with a layer of “glue” and then a layer of graham crackers. Place the prepared house on a table and provide bowls of assorted seeds and grains (corn, sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, raisins, dried fruit). Put the remaining “glue” in bowls and use craft sticks or plastic knives to spread glue on the house. Next, children can press handfuls of seed into the glue to it sticks and cover the entire form. *Bon Appetite!*

**Hint:** This can be an expensive project. Use a sign-up sheet and ask families to donate an ingredient. Another hint, if you can locate a feed store, you can usually buy small quantities (a pound) of seed rather than a 5 – 10 lb bag.



*Marlee and her preschoolers first place the house outside. Then they visited it daily to watch for animal tracks and evidence.*



# Upcoming Teacher Workshops

from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Calendar & registration on [www.mndnr.gov/plt/workshops.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/plt/workshops.html)

## PLT/WILD Early Childhood Workshops

9 am – 3:30 pm

Jan. 22, 2010 Anoka/Washington County Head Start, Coon Rapids

March 19, 2010 Kootaska Head Start, Grand Rapids

These 7-hour educator workshops will introduce the PLT and WILD early childhood activity guides. Learn nature-based preschool activities and methods through fun, hands-on, indoor and outdoor experiences that will teach science, math, language arts, social sciences, art, health, and physical education.

Activities are correlated to the Head Start domains.

**Cost:** \$30, includes

- \* *Minnesota Project Learning Tree Early Childhood Supplement Guide*
- \* *Project WILD Early Childhood Supplement Guide*
- \* *Natural Wonders Guide to Early Childhood for Environmental Educators*
- \* Six hours continuing education units (CEUs)

**To register:** Please register on Survey Monkey (Copy and paste this URL)

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fUYw5WrHfuyzzUoPEECnxw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=fUYw5WrHfuyzzUoPEECnxw_3d_3d)

**New workshops being are being scheduled all the time! Check out the Workshop Calendar at [www.mndnr.gov/plt/workshops.html](http://www.mndnr.gov/plt/workshops.html)**