



Schoolyard Habitat Foundation

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VALLEY SCHOOL AWARDED WILDLIFE HABITAT

Habitats Promote Conservation, Enhance Learning, Encourage Community Involvement

Phoenix, Arizona (March 17, 2009) - Schoolyard Habitat Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing a wildlife habitat to every K-12 school in Maricopa County, announced today the winner of the third annual Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat Contest. The contest was open to all K-12 Maricopa County schools. Seven amazing entries were received for this year's Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat Contest. After a long, arduous debate, the judging panel of 5 chose **Liberty Elementary School of Buckeye, Arizona**, as this year's recipient of a FREE wildlife habitat. Their winning essay can be viewed on-line at www.SchoolyardHabitatFoundation.org, and will be published on the back cover of the 2009 Parade of Ponds ticket booklet, the fundraiser for this extraordinary grant.

The habitat will include, at a minimum, design services and an organic water feature from The Pond Gnome and Travek appropriate to the school's habitat plan, native plants from Mountain States Wholesale Nursery, irrigation supplies from Ewing Irrigation, boulders and granite from West Valley Rock, and installation services from Sun Country Landscape.

Construction of the habitat will take place on October 1st and 2nd, 2009, and it will be open for public viewing during the 2010 Parade of Ponds, the Foundation's annual fundraiser for the contest. Last year's winner is open for viewing on this year's Parade of Ponds tour.

The **Parade of Ponds**, which funds and sponsorship have made this all possible, is a self-guided, weekend-long, Valley-wide tour of ponds and gardens to be held on **Saturday, April 25, 2009, and Sunday, April 26, 2008, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** The tax-deductible ticket price of \$15 per person (children 12 and under free) includes entry to 40 ponds, all weekend long! For more information, call 623-572-5607, or visit www.SchoolyardHabitatFoundation.org. Tickets can be purchased by phone, on-line, or at various retail stores around town (see website for exact locations).

“A wildlife habitat not only enhances a child’s learning experience but can be an opportunity for a child to understand the importance of preserving nature in our world of urban sprawl,” says Barbi Holdeman, co-founder of the Schoolyard Habitat Foundation. “This year’s winner, Foothills Elementary School, attracted the judges’ attention because they seemed to have a solid plan for the habitat that involved the parents, community and students in the building and maintenance of their wildlife habitat, as well as integrating its use into their curriculum.”

According to the National Wildlife Federation, a schoolyard habitat presents many teaching and learning opportunities in science, biology, English, mathematics, history, geography, social studies and art:

- Schoolyard habitats are living laboratories where students will observe and investigate the life cycle of an ecosystem, predator-prey relationships, examples of parasitism, symbiotic relationships and how organisms compete for resources;
- Students have an opportunity to apply math concepts and problem solving when graphing and charting the growth of plants, temperature changes, surface area and water volumes of a habitat;
- A range of communication skills will be needed to create, write and present plans for the design, construction, and maintenance of the habitat;
- As students develop and implement the plan to maintain and manage the habitat, they will acquire important life skills such as the need for budgeting, cooperation with others, respect for the right of others, sharing responsibility, time management and effective communication; and
- The habitat offers students an opportunity to learn about conservation and the environment.

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About Schoolyard Habitat Foundation:

The Schoolyard Habitat Foundation was founded in 2005 as a non-profit association to raise funds to build wildlife habitats in the K-12 school campuses of the Greater Phoenix area. The Foundation’s goals are to build a wildlife habitat in every K-12 Phoenix school. The Foundation’s fundraising efforts includes an annual *Parade of Ponds* tour that features some of the most spectacular wildlife habitats in the backyards of Phoenix residences and schools. Paul and Barbi Holdeman are certified Master Gardeners. Together, they have designed and built several wildlife habitats that have been approved by the Arizona Game and Fish Department as refugias for endangered species. For more information, please visit www.schoolyardhabitatfoundation.org/.