



MEDIA ADVISORY

Diane Brossart
Valley Forward Association
(602) 240-2408

Kari Mather
Olson Communications, Inc.
(602) 953-6786

VALLEY FORWARD EARTHFEST EDUCATION GRANTS PRESENTED TO EIGHT VALLEY SCHOOLS

PHOENIX, Ariz. (February 5, 2009) – Nearly \$7,500 in funding to support environmental education efforts in eight Arizona schools was awarded today through Valley Forward’s EarthFest Education Grant program, made possible by STMicroelectronics and other sponsors.

Over 2,000 students in grades K-12 will benefit from the grants, which will support environmental education projects at their schools or in their community. The projects focus on such topics as: water, air, land, plants and animals, recycling, transportation or energy.

“We received over 30 applications for funding from K-12 teachers throughout the state,” said Diane Brossart, president of Valley Forward. “Our evaluation committee was extremely impressed with the overall scope and caliber of all the projects proposed, making the selection process extra challenging.”

The grant opportunity was announced last fall at Valley Forward’s fifth annual EarthFest Educators Night, an event designed to provide teachers with environmental education resources, held in partnership with Freescale Semiconductor.

Recipients of Valley Forward’s 2008-09 EarthFest Education Grants include:

- **Burk Elementary School (Gilbert): \$1368** – Awarded to Lori Gallas, a teacher of gifted students in grades 4-6, for a project titled, “Arizona Speaks.” The students in Mrs. Gallas’s Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) will create a Virtual Classroom on the Internet. The Virtual Classroom will showcase pod casts created by the students to promote the natural resources of Arizona and encourage conservation of the land. The pod casts will focus on environmental issues important to the citizens of Arizona. Students will also create a series of public service announcements pertaining to the school and the town of Gilbert.
- **Dobson High School (Mesa): \$500** – Awarded to Shannon Hellem, a high school teacher, for a project titled, “Teaching Teenagers About Trash.” Students involved in the Environmental Club at Dobson High will expand the recycling program on campus. They will hold seminars on recycling and purchase recycling bins to teach teenagers how important it is to be environmentally conscious.

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- **Bios Christian Academy (Higley): \$487** – Awarded to Beth Ihms, a science high school teacher, for a project titled, “Will Growing Gardens of Native Plants in Urban Areas Support the Pollinators?” Working in conjunction with the Gilbert Riparian Preserve, students will participate in field research to determine which native plants attract the most pollinators and what type of pollinators they attract. This data will then be turned over to the Riparian Preserve to use for community education to help encourage people to plant native plants in their garden and yards.
- **Gateway Early College High School (Phoenix): \$800** – Awarded to Theresa Johnson, a biology instructor, for a project titled, “Water Quality Monitoring at the Rio Salado and Environmental Science Night.” Approximately 100 students in grades 9-10 will characterize and monitor both water quality and riparian ecology at two sites along the Rio Salado. They will use the collected data to create a comprehensive comparison of the two sites. This will illustrate to students the diverse range of water quality and demonstrate a greater understanding of the extent to which human decisions impact local ecosystems.
- **Madison Simis Elementary (Phoenix): \$1,500** – Awarded to Michelle Landreville, an elementary school teacher, for a project titled, “DIGGS Gardening Program.” Funding will support the school’s DIGGS program, a volunteer-run gardening project established in 1999. DIGGS has 100% participation from all classrooms and will expand with additional irrigated garden sites, add a sensory garden with pathways and benches, replace worn out and broken equipment, replace supplies used for classroom curriculum and thoroughly train volunteers.
- **Hartford Sylvia Encinas Elementary (Chandler): \$900** – Awarded to Julia Palazzi, coordinator of the Recycling Club, for a project titled, “Hartford’s Farmer’s Market.” Part one of this project is to have students collect leftover food, coffee grounds, ground clippings and soiled paper to create a school compost. It will then be used as a fertilizer to grow organic vegetables, fruits and flowers in a school garden. Part two is to set up a cistern to collect rainwater to be used to water the garden. Once the garden is fully productive the students will hold quarterly Community Farmers Markets.
- **Mesquite Junior High School (Gilbert): \$1,000** – Awarded to Cheryl Vitale, a science/ecology teacher, for a project titled, “AZ Ecology.” The Arizona Ecology project is an elective class that educates students on conservation, recycling and endangered species in Arizona. Students will work with ASU Ecology Explorers collecting arthropod data to measure the affect of urbanization on our environment. They will also develop a field guide to help identify and appreciate local plant and animal species.
- **Cheatham Elementary (Laveen): \$700** – Awarded to Cory Woodard, an elementary school teacher, for the project titled, “Operation Clean Up Cheatham.” Students at Cheatham Elementary will be in charge cleaning up the campus and planting flowers and trees that are native to Arizona. Depending on the grade level, students will learn a wide variety of science standards. The project will show students how cleaning the Earth is important, learning different ideas about science and plants and how to care for their school.

All grant projects must be completed by May 1, 2009 and recipients must provide a summary of their work with photos to Valley Forward.

Valley Forward Association is a 40-year-old, non-profit public interest organization that brings business and civic leaders together to convene thoughtful public dialogue on regional issues and to promote cooperative efforts to improve the environment and livability of Valley communities.