

Headlines



Rock Island Receives 2005 Environmental Hero Award

January 4, 2006

The City of Rock Island was recognized as one of 13 Illinois recipients for the Illinois 2005 Environmental Hero Awards. Awards are made to recognize the commitment to providing and maintaining a healthful environment for current and future generations in Illinois.

The award, presented by Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, was made in recognition of the City's [Rain Gardens for Rock Island Program](#). Rain Garden Administrator, Melody Miller, accepted the award on behalf of the City.



Melody Miller, Rain Garden Administrator, accepts the 2005 Environmental Hero Award from Lt. Governor Pat Quinn.

The Rain Gardens for Rock Island program was unveiled in 2005 to encourage local property owners to develop rain gardens for a period of five years. The award-winning program has resulted in dozens of new rain gardens which are planted to prevent flooding and improve water quality.

Other Illinois recipients are noted below:

Jana Bendik of Downers Grove who spearheaded the successful citizens campaign to win passage of a new state law to require government agencies to inform residents of toxic substances in their air, water, and soil. Twenty-one year old Bendik, who suffers from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma caused by toxins in her community's water, testified on behalf of the Toxic Chemical Disclosure Act signed by Gov. Rod Blagojevich this past summer.

Joan Silke and the Good Neighbor Committee, a grassroots organization that successfully launched and won a court battle against the Clark Oil Refinery (now Premcor) in response to refinery explosions that spewed toxic chemicals in Blue Island and threatened the health of the community's residents. In November of 2005, 6,000 current and former Blue Island residents were awarded more than \$120 million in compensatory and punitive damages.

Dr. Rodney Alford of Kankakee, spotlighted and won repairs in an unsafe water and sewer system in Pembroke, that left unaddressed, would have sent raw sewage into the Beavers Creek which flows into the Kankakee River.

Ron Humbert of Lombard will be posthumously honored for his work to educate students about the ecological importance of amphibians and reptiles. Past President of the Chicago Herpetological Society, Humbert organized the first-ever statewide online election with thousands of students and citizens participating to elect Illinois' official state reptile (Painted Turtle) and amphibian (Eastern Tiger Salamander).

Judy & Gregg Sacotnik of Vermilion County organized 150 volunteers to participate in two river cleanups this past spring, removing 20 tons of debris.

Glen Schuetz of Venedy, is a retired landowner who has worked to improve the wildlife habitat in Washington County by installing wetlands, native season grasses, and bottomland forest seedlings.

Joanne Skoglund of Havana has been a tireless volunteer with Friends of the Illinois River and has worked to create the "Illinois River Sweep", an annual river cleanup reaching 30 communities in the Illinois River watershed. In 2005, more than 1,300 volunteers participated.

Larry Thorsen of Casey leads the Embarras Volunteer Stewards and donated 40 Saturdays a year to protecting Illinois' natural heritage.

The City of Naperville has had more than 1,000 residents and businesses invest in green power through its voluntary Renewable Energy Program since January 2005 – the estimated environmental benefit from each participant is equivalent to planting 181 trees.

The City of Peoria passed a landmark Stream Buffer Ordinance this year to protect the water quality of the Illinois River and control the sedimentation of the Peoria Lake.

The Fox River Monitoring Network (Friends of the Fox River) of Crystal Lake is a volunteer water quality-monitoring program for the Fox River watershed. Friends of the Fox River has enlisted the assistance of more than 3,500 students, teachers, and adults to monitor stream sites annually.

The Southeast Environmental Task Force of Chicago, which focuses on open space, pollution prevention, and community outreach and education, won passage of an ordinance establishing a 20-year moratorium on landfills – enacted by the Chicago City Council in 2005.