

**Black Hills Audubon Society
Dave McNett Environmental Educator Award**

2011 Winner: Susie Vanderburg

(presented by Debbie Nickerson, Education Committee Chair)

It is an honor to present Susie Vanderburg with this year's Dave McNett Environmental Educator of the Year Award.

Susie has been an integral part of our community's environmental education community since 1992 when she wrote her first curriculum, "Washington Forests" for the Washington Forest Protection Association. From there she went on to develop teacher workshops for Discover Wetlands and her own "Project Home Planet".

In 1993, several of us met her when she was hired by the Thurston County Storm and Surface Water Utility to be the first Public Involvement and Education Coordinator where she developed and implemented Stream Team, and created school programs to align with the action work of the Stream Team.

In addition, she played a key role in the collaborative approach among the county jurisdictions for integrated public awareness and education", helped to lead the Stream Team in adopting macro-invertebrate sampling to assess stream health, and introduced county homeowners to the importance and care of their neighborhood storm water facilities.

Rochelle Rothaus remembers Susie as one "of the rare breed that didn't forget what it was like for a teacher in the classroom. She was approachable, reliable and realistic. Additionally, she also was always able to connect with the students, never talking above or below them, just sharing her passion for the environment with them. 5th grade teacher Jane Poole recalls her "very clear, concise, and complete way of explaining to 10 year olds how water moves across land into the ground" and tries to replicate it herself each time she teaches the concept.

Middle school teacher Debra Wood found Susie, "such a valuable resource when it came time every year to train students in macro-invertebrate monitoring. Every year, she assisted South Sound GREEN & the Nisqually River Education Project to train students in the "whys & wherefores" of biological monitoring and every year she was present at the annual GREEN Student Congress where students gathered to analyze their data.

I worked side by side with Susie on vegetation projects and attended several of her classroom presentations. She is the quintessential professional, preparing well for her audience and engaging them throughout her lessons. She was always organized and there when the bus pulled up, students erupting with the enthusiasm she put to good use on native planting parties.

Rhonda Hunter of the Dept. of Ecology remembers her dedication to learning about

macro-invertebrates saying "she sure learned those little macro-invertebrates and how to teach them to adults or kids for biological stream monitoring! Anne Mills says she was always affectionately known as the "bug lady".

Her commitment to restoration compelled her to stockpile 1000's of buckets of native trees & shrubs, and then lift & carry them to multiple watershed restoration sites. In all, she has given several hundred classroom presentations, and, with the help of numerous volunteers, planted over 13,000 native plants along local riparian zones and stenciled over a thousand storm drains with the message "Dump No Waste: Drains to Stream"

Now as the lead Environmental Educator at the new LOTT WET Science Center, Susie understands the needs of classroom teachers, kids of all ages, and community adults; she networks with colleagues throughout Thurston County and the state to help students and adults see water as a precious resource and discover how to conserve it. Lisa Dennis-Perez believes "her creativity and dedication have made the center come alive!".

Her work over the past two plus decades has made a positive difference in the lives of our fellow human beings as well as the wildlife we all love and for which we seek protection..

She may retire and go kayaking, but until then, she is still hard at work educating our friends and neighbors in the benefits of resource preservation. Thank you Susie Vanderburg for your dedication to our environment and our people. Your work has made a huge difference in our region. May you continue to do what you love and at what you excel for many years to come.