

Community Stewards: *Honored, Welcomed, Wanted*



Rescue, Reclaim and Restore: 3Rs of Environmental Education

Thank you, all.

On June 7th, Dr. E.W. Coffin Elementary School became the Recipient of an Alberta Emerald Award for Environmental Excellence in the Education: School or Classroom category for its ongoing environmental program, recently culminating in a prairie 'rescue, reclaim, and restore' project associated with Whispering Woods Natural Area Park. www.emeraldawards.com

Darryl Senholt, Grade 4, and Lucky Innis, Grade 3, were delegated to speak for all the students at their school. An extraordinarily well-spoken young lad, Darryl confidently and clearly addressed the assembled crowd at Jack Singer Concert Hall.

'On behalf of the school, we would like to thank all of the teachers, staff, parents, students, and community members who've worked so hard over the last 13 years on all the many environmental projects at our school, especially our new Prairie Amphitheatre and Centennial Natureground. Thank you, all.'

Thank you, indeed! If you attended, supported, worked or volunteered at Dr. Coffin School in any way or at any time over the last decade, especially in the last few years, then this award absolutely belongs to you as well. With an enduring foundation, a small community has been able to tackle a huge venture.

Extra special thanks are due for the committed leadership shown by current principal, Juane Priest, and former principal, Joy Chadwick. Rob Biegun and Sonia Gonsalves of the City of Calgary Natural Areas have, through joint stewardship of Whispering Woods, shared and supported the school's outdoor endeavors. With neighbors and friends like Jill Kirker of Grassroots NW Environmental Awareness Society, Pat Fedkenheuer of ALCLA Native Plants, and Bernie Amell of Riparia, we were together able to achieve an evolving shared vision that continues to inspire this prairie reclamation and restoration mission.

Collaborations with other city and provincial departments, the Calgary Zoo, Olds College, the University of Calgary, and many others, as well as support from sponsors such as Alberta Ecotrust, The Calgary Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment, Parks Foundation – Calgary, Alberta Community Initiatives Program, and Evergreen Foundation, together provided the means to bring vision to realization.

It has indeed been my personal honor and privilege to *dig together* in community with all these neighbors. The circle of learning at Dr. Coffin School casts a wide circumference, and is not merely for the young. We set about to make a prairie space our children could immerse themselves in, not because we already knew how, but because we recognized the importance of doing so. The students and public will have numerous opportunities for close encounters with our native fescue grassland ecosystem for many years to come.

Make this project yours as well!

Join our contact list to be informed about workbees [*refreshments!*], volunteer opportunities, and celebrations. We welcome you to our growing circle of neighbors as stewards of our local environment. Please try any or all of these people to find out more:

Gisele at 289-9603 or dumaines@shaw.ca

Debbie at 226-3524 or debbiehall@shaw.ca

Polly at 282-2014 or plknowlton.cockett@shaw.ca

Attack those Invasive Species!

Whether toiling in your own garden, or when helping in the Natureground or Whispering Woods, there are several plant species that you are encouraged to pull out at will.

Thistles, smooth brome, goat's beard and dandelions are just a few. There're also the troubling scentless chamomile, oxeye daisy, toadflax and creeping bellflower to deal with, and a host of less pesky annual weeds like stinkweed and shepherd's purse. All are threats to the well-being of our native species.

Join your neighbors this summer in supporting your local environment through any of these community building endeavors. All efforts, large and small, are welcomed and wanted. And soon, we may just be able to walk across *Whispering Grasses Walkway* together, over John Laurie Boulevard to Nose Hill Park. Stay tuned!

Environmentally yours,

Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett, 282-2014 or plknowlton.cockett@shaw.ca

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