



Maine Teacher Lauded By UNH Forest Watch Program

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Nancy Chesley, a recently retired elementary schoolteacher from the Mabel I. Wilson School in Cumberland, Maine, was awarded the 2006 Gary N. Lauten Award for outstanding service and commitment to the University of New Hampshire's Forest Watch program at a ceremony held recently on the Durham campus. In addition to the Lauten plaque, Chesley was presented with the handcrafted, wood-burned walking stick that is given annually to recipients of the award.

Chesley, who taught in a self-contained second grade classroom, has been involved in Forest Watch since 1993. The program is a unique, hands-on way of conducting science with the help of primary and secondary school students who collect and process data relating to air pollution damage in forest stands in New England. Over 350 schools have participated in the program, with some 50 to 100 actively engaged in monitoring white pines, a bio-indicator species for ground-level ozone or smog, in any given year.

Receiving the award, Chesley noted, is especially gratifying because "Gary Lauten was a gifted teacher who could demonstrate and explain advanced concepts in remote sensing in a way that even a second-grade teacher who didn't major in science could understand. He was Forest Watch's version of Carl Sagan."

Lauten, a former Air Force lieutenant colonel who died in December 2001, served as the Forest Watch coordinator from 1992-1999. In 2002, the educational outreach program began recognizing teachers who best exemplify Lauten's devotion to Forest Watch's long-term goals.

"This award recognizes Gary's commitment to making science accessible in the classroom," said Barry Rock, Forest Watch director and professor of natural resources and plant biology at UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) and the Department of Natural Resources.

Chesley said her second graders were always eager to help scientists collect information on the health of white pines and "always took their work very seriously" in spite of some challenges. "Some of them weren't tall enough to reach the height required to measure the diameter of a tree!"

Over the course of 15 years, Forest Watch has demonstrated that students can collect valuable data for ongoing scientific research and learn science and mathematics by doing research in their local area. Student data have clearly shown how responsive white pines are to year-to-year variations in ozone levels.

For more information on Forest Watch, go to www.forestwatch.sr.unh.edu.

Editors: A photo is available to download here:

http://www.unh.edu/news/img/lauten_award.jpg

Photo caption: Second-grade schoolteacher Nancy Chesley with the 2006 Gary N. Lauten Award. UNH professor Barry Rock (left) directs the Forest Watch program and Mike Gagnon (right) serves as program coordinator. Photo by Will Kessler.