

2022 PAEE Award Winners



KEYSTONE AWARD

Steve Wasiesky Asbury Woods Nature Center

Steve has been a staff member, volunteer, Environmental Education Coordinator at Asbury Woods for a combined 52 years. He served as Executive Director of Asbury Woods Nature Center from 2011 to July 2016. At that time the Asbury Woods Partnership purchased Asbury Woods from the Millcreek Township School District. Steve is currently the Environmental Education Coordinator for the Millcreek Township School District, (MTSD), at Asbury Woods. He has developed environmental science units for and teaches the K-5, 8, and High School students that visit Asbury Woods from MTSD, and developed the original version and taught the 6 & 7th grade watershed education curriculum. Steve has been a member of PAEE since the late 1970's, and has served on the Board of Directors for PAEE since 2010. He has held the position of NE Regional Director and was President from 2018-2020. He is currently serving as Past President.



Steve also serves on the Board of the Lake Erie Arboretum, Advisory Board for the College of Science and Health Department at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, The PA Advisory Council for Environmental Education, and the Content & Writing Committees for the 2020 update of the PA State Academic Standards for Science & Technology and Environment & Ecology.

OUTSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR AWARD



Dr. Judi Sittler STREAM Girls

Judi Sittler started her career as a Special Education teacher. After retirement, she got involved with a women's fly-fishing group and from there was invited to join the local Trout Unlimited chapter. By combining her love of teaching youth and her newfound knowledge of coldwater conservation, she dove headfirst into the Trout Unlimited Youth Programs initiating events such as the "Get Outdoors Family Fishing Picnic" that invited the community and helped families fish on a local pond. In the last three years, she has devoted most of her time to establishing the TU Headwaters STREAM Girls program in all six regions of Pennsylvania. An important part of this program is making partnerships with a local TU chapter and an outside conservation organization. PAEE has been a "gold mine" for making those partnerships.

Climate in Rural Systems Partnership

CRSP brings together a diverse group of educators, scientists, artists, farmers, conservationists, civil servants, faith groups, and outdoor recreationists who want to work together to take action for the climate and future of Western PA. The people and organizations are trusted members within their communities because they understand the perspectives, values, goals and needs of their neighbors. CRSP network members collaborate to co-develop, pilot, and refine tools to help people spark and navigate productive conversations about climate action in rural communities. Quarterly gatherings provide a supportive place to practice using these resources and strategies and plan different ways to engage the public on complex issues of jobs, health, policy, science, energy, and justice.



You'll find three members of the Research Leadership Team for the Laurel Highlands Climate in Rural Systems Partnership (CRSP) at Powdermill Nature Reserve, the environmental research station of Carnegie Museum of Natural History! Alexis Boytim, Environmental Educator for GIS Resources, supports climate change education and communication opportunities with CRSP network members through resource co-development. Lauren Horner, Senior Environmental Educator & Naturalist and Hub Coordinator for the Laurel Highlands CRSP Network, connects organizations to develop resources and improve climate change conversations. Bryce Stouffer, GIS Research Scientist, supports the CRSP project and its network members using the resources of the GIS Lab. The CRSP Team works together to make meaningful connections and promote climate change education and communication.

The Mercer County Conservation District's vision is to strive to enhance the rural character and economic viability of the county while protecting our natural resources. In addition to our usual efforts such as guiding residents in regulatory compliance and implementing conservation education programs, we partnered with Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Powdermill Nature Reserve, and University of Pittsburgh UPCLOSE to form the Climate and Rural Systems Partnership (CRSP) in 2019. CRSP aims to discuss climate change and its effects on local rural communities. Our hub of CRSP, the Shenango Climate and Rural Environmental Study Team (SCREST), brings together local organizations, businesses, and nonprofits in Northwestern PA. SCREST's focus topics are watershed protection: stormwater and flooding resilience, agriculture and food production, and backyard climate gardening; all of which are addressed through meetings, workshops, mini-grants, and more.

Mary Ann Steiner's research focuses on understanding how community members come together to learn, design and support the learning of others around science topics meaningful to daily life. As a participant researcher, her studies typically involve close collaboration with groups over time to co-design experiences that support network efforts in continued learning and public engagement. Her collaborations often draw on the expertise of the network members, on the arts, and local and emotional connection to often complex, socio scientific topics, like climate change.



OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

John Plischke

Western PA Mushroom Club

John Plischke III is a founding member of the Western Pennsylvania Mushroom Club, which has become one of the largest mushroom clubs in the US. He can often be found away from home in the woods giving mushroom talks, identifying, and photographing mushrooms. When not in the woods John can be found on iNaturalist helping others identify their mushrooms, where he has made 375,844 mushroom identifications for others.



DAISY S. KLINEDINST MEMORIAL AWARD



Your paragraph text

Alexa Sarussi

Shaver's Creek Environmental Center

Alexa Sarussi is the School Programs Director at Shaver's Creek Environmental Center where she has worked to develop partnership-based programming with local schools since 2018. She is proud to have cultivated close relationships with school partners through a scaffolded, multi-visit model that connects students to the outdoors at their school, as well as at Shaver's Creek. Alexa also coordinates Shaver's Creek's nature journal programs, including monthly meetups and regular workshops, which bring together people of all ages and abilities to inspire closer observation and curiosity about the natural world.

