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Schools Receive Grants to Advance Conservation Education

Rainwater Revival and Hill Country Alliance provide incentives for schools to use water from the sky



Christy Muse (Left), Executive Director of the Hill Country Alliance, presents a \$900 rainwater conservation grant check to Dr. Judith Hutchinson of J.J. Pickle Elementary School in Austin.

Two Austin schools – J.J. Pickle Elementary and Eden Park Academy – are receiving financial assistance to help conserve water resources at their schools and teach students about the value of water conservation. Both schools have been awarded grants by the Rainwater Revival, an annual event that brings together water conservation experts and the public.

The schools received two of the three grants awarded from proceeds from the auction of rain barrels decorated by area professional artists, and matching funds from the Hill Country Alliance, which sponsors the event.

“This \$900 grant will help us turn an eroding slope that becomes a muddy mess when it rains into an educational rain garden and self-sustaining pond ecosystem,” said Dr. Judith Hutchinson, a special education teacher at Pickle Elementary in northeast Austin. “We’ll have a valuable outdoor area for teaching and learning that complements our butterfly, vegetable and peace gardens.”

Eden Park Academy, a charter school in south Austin, will use its \$900 award for rain barrels and improvements to the guttering that will direct rainwater into the barrels, according to Principal Johnnie Smith. "Our school uses rainwater for its green spaces," he said. "This grant will help us expand our use of rainwater directly into our community garden program, which encourages students and their families to learn and spend quality time together."

"Talented Hill Country artists design and paint the rain barrels that are auctioned off at the Rainwater Revival, making these unique works of art a delightful and useful addition to landscapes," Christy Muse, executive director of the Hill County Alliance, said. "The art community is very in tune with the connection between art and nature and is eager to help students learn the value of water."

The third grant will be presented soon to Bandera Middle School (Bandera ISD), which will expand the use of captured HVAC condensate for irrigation purposes, a project designed, implemented and guided by a cooperative effort involving students, faculty and staff.

The 2012 Rainwater Revival, a free event filled with music, food, fun and rainwater education from basic to advanced, is set for Saturday, October 27, at the Boerne Convention Center, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit www.rainwaterrevival.com for more information about the event and to see photos of rain barrels transforming into works of art.

The Hill Country Alliance is a non-profit organization dedicated to caring for the unique features of the Texas Hill Country for the benefit of future generations. Visit HCA at www.hillcountryalliance.org.