



Six Win Awards

**Dunn Foundation announces
Community Appearance Education Awards**

**Spring 2007
Newsletter**

In March, Dunn Foundation, Executive Director, Richard C. Youngken presented the *2007 Excellence in Community Appearance Education Awards* at a special dinner in Newport, Rhode Island. The awards were presented to six teachers and educators who have shown outstanding leadership to engage students and school districts in celebrating their region's unique community character and sense of place.

Across the United States, cities, towns, villages and rural areas are losing their distinctive cultural, historic, and visual character.

"The Foundation's mission is to educate children and adults to this phenomenon and cause change to allow beauty and growth to co-exist," stated Richard C. Youngken. "We are honored to celebrate the work and leadership of these exceptional educators. They and their students are sterling ambassadors whose work exemplifies the positive change we seek."

The award criteria are based upon the development and implementation of a model community enrichment program that is fully embraced by schools and school districts through the ingenuity, creativity, and persistence of key individuals. Eligible programs must be able to be duplicated elsewhere in the country, be sustainable, and have grown over several years.

Excellence in Community Appearance Education Award Winners

Angie Cook, Coordinator, Copper Basin Learning Center, Copper Basin High School, Copperhill, Tennessee

Copperhill, Tennessee has a bright future, thanks to teacher Angie Cook and the students at the Copper

**Learn about the
DUNN Foundation's
ViewFinders Too, and
our mini-grants program
Visit our website at
www.dunnfoundation.org**

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Dunn Foundation Educator's Retreat

The Dunn Foundation recently hosted a retreat of education leaders and teachers familiar with and using community appearance materials and *ViewFinders Too*.

Participants from across the US shared their successes and challenges. They suggested that we should strengthen the appeal of our educational materials by making clear how broadly the materials can be used to meet educational standards – math, language arts, art, social sciences,

civics, science and health, etc. Further discussion revealed support for a campaign to create a media buzz on community identity issues – both in the teaching/ed community and in the general public.

However, "*visual environmental education – or community appearance education*" – is a non-starter and a real tongue-twister – it is hard to understand as a term for this topic.



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Basin Schools. Through the efforts of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), US EPA and Glenn Springs Holdings, Inc., these once-blighted red hills have been restored; trees and forests have reclaimed the landscape. This acclaimed restoration is cause for great celebration. Sadly, acid rain and the effects of decades of copper mining and smelting in the Copper Basin have been usurped by a more insidious foe: *suburban sprawl*.

To ensure that history doesn't repeat itself and that the visual and natural environment remains protected, **Angie Cook** developed an elementary school curriculum, provided extensive high school teacher training and established the *Basin Pride Club* for students to devise after-school activities. By forging a strong connection between the arts, science, history, historic & environmental preservation and the local community, Angie created a mentoring program between high school and elementary students, infused community character education into the mainstream classroom in grades 9-12 and involved over half of the Copper Basin High School teachers in the process. Students help coordinate community events such as Happy Earth Day and serve as ambassadors to surrounding communities to share the importance of caring about and maintaining the visual character of their community.

Rosemary Martin-Moore, Teacher of Gifted Students, Kachina and Peoria Elementary Schools, and the Peoria Unified School District, Peoria, Arizona

Peoria, Arizona is one of dozens of new communities that literally sprouted in the deserts outside Phoenix. Teacher **Rosemary Martin-Moore** developed a district-wide, multi-year gifted and talented program utilizing community appearance education to challenge, stimulate and immerse youth directly in the fast-paced growth and challenging development issues facing their neighborhoods and communities. In the first year, students compared life in an established town, Glendale, which is centered on a park and

library, to the new Peoria, centered on a mall. The elementary students also toured *Taliesin West*, Frank Lloyd Wright's Arizona home, to study his philosophy and to learn how to design and build communities that complement the natural environment. In the program's second year, they applied this awareness to specific projects and community outreach.

At Kachina Elementary, one of 30 participating schools, students made a movie showcasing choices: wide streets with no trees, or narrow lanes; homogeneous houses replacing a farm, or unique residential and commercial buildings on Main Street; benefits of walking and biking versus car dependence. Another group of youngsters contacted Peoria City Council members and made a presentation. When the new Glendale Stadium was constructed and its outlying buildings mimicked a small town around the stadium instead of a strip mall, the students felt empowered and directly responsible for this positive outcome.

Vincent Case, Teacher and the School on Wheels High School, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Vincent Case and his

School on Wheels students implemented a service learning project based upon community appearance education that combines a unique environmental education curriculum on xeriscaping and sustainability. (Xeriscaping is the discipline of water conserving landscape design, imperative in a state with such serious water resource issues as New Mexico.) In addition to a very timely and appropriate project focus, this program took place in a difficult and unusual venue: the School on Wheels High School, an alternative high school for at-risk students. Other school campuses have beautiful landscaping; the School on Wheels does not. Simultaneously embarrassed and motivated, the students designed and installed a xeriscaped garden, the new centerpiece of their campus.

A key outcome of the project's success is the new career decisions for many of the participating students, renewing their commitment to higher education. One teenage student, her baby in her arms, now plans to pursue a career in landscape design. The students built confidence, taking great pride in their new-found leadership skills and interests while gaining self-esteem and a deeper appreciation for their community and its appearance.



Excellence in Community Appearance Education Award certificate. Rosemary Martin-Moore, 2007

AWARDS *Continued from page 2*

Joan Chadde and Michigan Technological University, Houghton, Michigan

"Looks Count! looks great" read local headlines about **Joan Chadde's** innovative project. Ms. Chadde, Outreach Coordinator for the Center of Science and Environmental Outreach at Michigan Technological University, created a middle school community appearance curriculum with a land use focus as well as a design manual used as a teaching aide and broadly disseminated both across northern Michigan and the Great Lakes area. *Looks Count!* merges these materials into the traditional science education curriculum, building on Ms. Chadde's work with the National Science Teachers Association. *Design Guidelines to Enhance Community Appearance and Protect Natural Resources* is a guidebook for citizens, decision-makers, and youth that compares conventional sprawl development to a more visually appealing approach that also protects natural and cultural resources. Tools to accomplish the recommended approach are suggested. The national Smart Growth Network put the Design Guidelines on their resources website (www.smartgrowth.org) and more than 4000 copies in 42 states, 256

communities and 4 countries have been distributed since May 2006.

Peggy Carnahan and Our Lady of the Lake University, San Antonio, Texas

This project focuses on teacher training and promotion of community appearance education in Texas, the second largest state in the country. Peggy Carnahan's program combines traditional science education with community appearance education and introduces both in-service and pre-service teachers to these materials. Further, project materials are components of graduate level education courses at Our Lady of the Lake University and the project serves as a model for other higher education teacher programs and resource centers. Find out more at www.education.olluse.edu/-science/.

Merit Award Winner

Ted Mitchell and the Knotty Oak Middle School, Coventry, Rhode Island (Cont.)

Middle School Social Studies teacher Ted Mitchell devised an integrated social studies and civics program that features a strong emphasis on local comprehensive planning and community appearance. The program uses *View-*

Finders Too, a place-based, interdisciplinary curriculum developed by the Dunn Foundation to examine the dynamic relationship between the built and natural environments. **Ted Mitchell** challenges his students to explore the concepts of community character, community appearance and visual pollution. They gain an understanding of how land use, growth and development, design and community planning, and an increasingly technological society affect Coventry and communities across the country. This insight is invaluable since Rhode Island is the second most densely populated state in the country. Learn more about this program at

www.mitchellteachers.net.



Joan Chadde receives her award from Rich Youngken and Sandi Ryack-Bell, 3/2007

Dunn Retreat *Continued from page 1*

There should be a snappier sound bite or name for this type of educational focus – perhaps this could be centered around a positive moniker. The retreat developed a long list of ideas for names for the movement.

For buzz creation – both educational and general – the group suggested a contest as a great idea for Foundation sponsorship. The contest could be a production of a new film on the issues with input from youth in schools, who would post (via the internet) footage on the visual environment from their communities. The effort could be publicized via web-based promotion and press. The event would have to be well-planned and orchestrated for maximum effect.

To continue educational buzz and further support our work, the group pledged to create a network with Dunn Foundation help. The Dunn website could be used as a platform for the network of users to introduce, interrelate and share new materials and existing efforts. An overall tone would be to imbue the Foundation's mission in the mission of others – to collaborate on projects – such as the Smart Growth network, sustainable communities, and other movements. This has a multiplier effect in that the general population is already interested in these issues as well as teachers.

Also our initiative with Project Learning Tree (assisting with the new *Places We Live* curriculum) was lauded

as an excellent example of piggy backing with a larger non-profit. We should be exploring other like partnerships.

Sandi Ryack-Bell of the Foundation is enthusiastic about the user network created through the retreat.

"This network will help us create new partnerships in a number of different regions across the US. We are particularly interested in working on place-based education and service-learning opportunities," said Richard C. Youngken, the Foundation's Executive Director.

Stay tuned for a possible film contest.

Commentary: Curb Appeal

What is “Curb Appeal?” Recently we have been asked to comment on how **correcting** visual blight—including overhead wires and poles, high voltage transmission lines, oversized and cluttered signage, billboards, and the blighting influence of sprawling, poorly designed strip commercial architecture—leads to progressive economic development. Or put another way, how does an enhanced visual environment lead to enhanced economic development activity? **The answer seems rather obvious.** Some, including those who market residential and commercial property, refer to this as the question of “curb appeal.” Curb appeal is that gut feeling one has when looking at a property. It is the first impression.

In searching for a house, just about every home-buyer or renter, has made the “drive-by.” If the house or property looks good from the curb, maybe a more prolonged return visit will be worth while. If, on the other hand, the property is run down, architecturally disappointing, or somehow marred by blight, further investigation is usually out of the question. The decision is often made rather quickly—as the car drives by. And one could argue so it goes for commercial, recreational areas, and whole communities. The decision on whether or not to stop and look further is made rather quickly.

A community can have curb appeal or not. Ask yourself, do you know of a community with a visually attractive built environment that is suffering from economic decline



Central Falls, RI from the new *Blackstone Valley View-Finders Too* curriculum. Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, 2006

and loss of business investment?? On the other hand, can you think of a community that suffers from visual blight and is hard-pressed to attract beneficial and significant sustainable economic development investment??

Often a community starts out being attractive and then suffers development and investment that is not compatible with its character. More than likely the culprit is new standardized design that erodes the community’s individuality and identity and is not sustainable in the long term. Strip commercial areas with cluttered signage are usually found in these communities, in many cases in gateway areas. Historic downtowns, village centers or Main Streets are usually struggling to stay alive. The first impression is not a good one. Run down is what most say.

Communities that invest in curbing visual blight significantly increase their chances of attracting beneficial economic development. In most cases the economic return far outweighs the costs associated with blight removal.

So, does your community have curb appeal?

The DUNN Foundation

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Watch for the NAAEE 2007 annual conference (Virginia Beach) registration forms. They should be in the mail soon. The Dunn Foundation will be offering a pre-conference session on service-learning opportunities again, in partnership this year with Earth Force!

We are on the Web!
www.dunnfoundation.org

Using *ViewFinders Too*, or similar material?? Send us your stories! We want to hear from you!
viewfinders@dunnfoundation.org