



AV Educator Named 2007 MEEC Teacher of the Year

More than sixty educators, students, business and civic leaders joined together in recognizing MEEC's 2007 Teacher of the Year at the Spring Valley Lake Country Club in Victorville on April 26th for the annual awards banquet.

Antelope Valley educator Mary O'Connell took top honors as Teacher of the Year for her work on creating an Environmental Career Pathway at Eastside High School in Lancaster.

O'Connell, a Biology Teacher and Science Department Head, was praised by her principal Tom Grady. "Mary is the kind of teacher that turns kids onto science and our test scores prove it," Grady said during the presentation of her award.

O'Connell was presented with a commemorative Teacher of the Year plaque and a \$300 prize for her work with students in the Antelope Valley Union High School District.

Barbara Ward-Lawe and Wendi Rodriguez were each named MEEC Teachers of Excellence for their work with students and the community in the Hesperia Unified School District and the Snowline

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2007 Mojave Environmental Education Consortium (MEEC) Teacher of the Year Mary O'Connell, foreground, credits the support of her administrators after receiving her award at the third annual MEEC Teacher of Year Banquet held at the Spring Valley Lake Country Club in Victorville. O'Connell teaches in the Antelope Valley Union High School District. Behind O'Connell are MEEC Board members (left to right) Cheryl Smith, Teresa Healy and Michael Haro.

MEEC Also Honors 2007 Students of the Year

Teachers weren't the only people honored for their environmental commitment in local schools and communities during this year's Teacher of the Year Banquet. Four High Desert teens also won awards for their efforts.

Sarah Landeros of Victorville, Brianna Lawrence of Desert High School on Edwards Air Force Base, Melanie Promer of Excelsior Education Center in Victorville and Morwena Rowe of Sultana High School in Hesperia were each awarded framed certificates and gift cards after being successfully nominated MEEC "Students of the Year" by teachers at their respective schools.



2007 Teachers and Students of the Year gathered with MEEC Board members following the third annual awards banquet held at the Spring Valley Lake Country Club in Victorville.

The students spearheaded notable efforts on important environmental issues.

Sarah worked both with her school and her Girl Scouts chapter to increase environmental awareness and stewardship through a variety of community projects including serving as one of the student leaders for the recent Youth Environmental Leadership Conference sponsored by MEEC.

Brianna has been the leader for her school's campus clean-up and recycling program through her involvement

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YELC 2007: A Day of Learning, a Day of Fun

Students from throughout the Victor and Antelope Valleys attended MEEC's 2nd Annual Youth Environmental Leadership Conference (YELC) held at the High Desert Academy of Applied Arts and Sciences in Victorville on April 14th. The theme of this year's conference was "Every Drop Counts" and focused on water conservation.

All forty-five students in attendance at the day long conference were able to learn - through hands-on workshops - important information about the water cycle, California wetlands and water conservation methods for homes, schools and communities.

"The students learned a great deal from an awesome group of presenters this year," said YELC Coordinator Cindi Wray. "It was through MEEC's partnerships with our sponsors like the LA County Sanitation Districts, that we were able to provide such an enriching learning environment for the students."

The three workshops presented were "When in Drought, Doing Without," "California Wetlands" and "The

Water Cycle." Workshop leaders brought in visual aids and other hands-on tools to teach the students about these important concepts.

One of the conference's highlights was the return of several students from the

first YELC conference who participated as Student Mentors for the day.

"I think it shows the value of YELC when you have participants willing to come back to help other students learn the importance of environmental issues and conservation," said Wray. "I am looking forward to this year's participants also being able to return and contribute their experiences at future YELC events."

The highlight of the day for many of the students — in addition to the workshops — was the fun filled water games extravaganza that allowed the three

student groups to compete for prizes. Each game focused on teamwork and games that stressed water conservation methods.

In appreciation for their participation, each student received a \$50 Savings Bond an official conference T-shirt and a YELC backpack filled with school supplies. Students were also treated to lunch, snacks and an awards ceremony with their parents at the end of



YELC participants learn about water conservation while having fun during a round of water games held in between workshops at the conference.

the day.

Following this year's conference, each participant received a proclamation from Senator Diane Feinstein, who congratulated each student for his/her participation and eagerness to help with environmental conservation.



SBCO Fire Department Presents Riskwatch "Community Detectives" Workshop

San Bernardino County Fire Department's Penni Overstreet-Murphy, treated local teachers to a fascinating, standards-based workshop held at the MDAQMD on May 9, 2007.

The workshop was held in the evening and offered to all MEEC teachers in the Mojave Desert area.

The workshop focused on teaching students how to identify risk factors in their environment, such as water safety issues and other dangers they may encounter. Free curriculum and other teaching aids were provided to all participants.



Penni Overstreet-Murphy answers participants' questions during the "RiskWatch Community Detectives" workshop for teachers held at the MDAQMD.



Piute Ponds: A Learning Oasis in the Desert

Did you know that the High Desert has its own wetlands oasis which serves as an important stopping point for as many as 200 different species of migrating birds? Did you know it is right on our own Edwards Air Force Base? Did you know this spectacular watershed is available for school field trips and bird watching excursions?

MEEC's Antelope Valley Advisory Council has been working with Victor Valley Community College's Teaching Learning Center students to develop standards-based curriculum for teachers wishing to visit the site with their students, and to use it to teach about wetlands and watershed topics.

Piute Ponds consists of two excellent areas for bird watching and learning about migratory bird habitats. Also at key locations, there are more detailed kiosks of the other wildlife in and around the ponds such as beavers, ground squirrels, and other mammals.

"We are excited as we continue to bring all of the pieces together to be able to offer students and teachers an immersive and easy to use curriculum before and after their visit to Piute

Ponds," said Violette Roberts, MEEC Executive Board Chair.

Lesson plans are currently being created as well as learning kits and a website that will allow students to learn more about the wetlands prior to their trip. Then, with the support of the website, students will be able to continue their learning and monitor what is happening via podcasts from their own classrooms.

"We are really excited about working with Victor Valley Community College's teacher preparation program to develop this curriculum," said Roberts. "Especially when we were able to bring podcasting and the web to the table for students not just in our area but potentially anywhere you can access the web."

Piute Ponds trips will be available as part of the EnviroBus Bucks program for the next school year. For more information on visiting Piute Ponds, call Edwards AFB Biologist Mark Hagan at (661) 277-1418.



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Joint Unified School District, respectively.

Although Barbara is a high school counselor at Hesperia's Community Day School, she has successfully trained students on how to give effective presentations to other students, teachers and the community on ways to conserve energy as well as other energy efficiency measures everyone can use. She is also instrumental in helping inspire her students to volunteer as aides for environmental workshops, activities and community projects.

Wendi, an eighth grade teacher at Heritage School in Phelan, keeps her students involved in a variety of environmental projects including taking them on annual whale watching trips and raising and caring for exotic fish. She is also the advisor for the school's Marine Society.

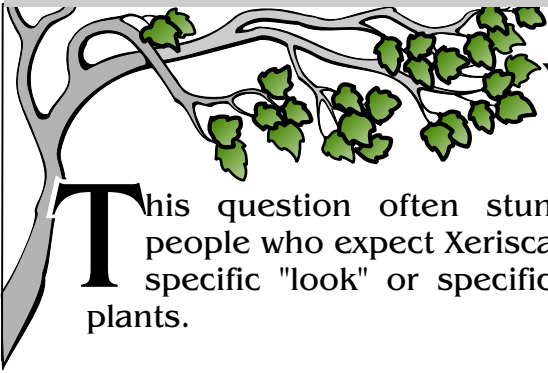
During the awards banquet, Wendi was honored by one of her former students and MEEC

Executive Board member, Desirea Haggard who presented her with her award. Haggard currently works as an Environmental Engineer with TXI Riverside Cement.

"Wendi's efforts in the classroom and concern for taking care of the environment is one of the factors that helped shape me in my environmental career path," Haggard said.

All teachers were selected after nominations went out in early March to school principals and administrators. Winners were selected after a review of the nominations by MEEC Executive Board members.

The High Desert Academy Jazz Band provided live entertainment as everyone was treated to a well prepared meal in the beautiful surroundings of the Spring Valley Lake Country Club.



What is Xeriscape?

This question often stumps many people who expect Xeriscape to be a specific "look" or specific group of plants.

Although dry (xeric) rock gardens can be truly marvelous, there are many wonderful choices other than rock for the xeric portions of Xeriscape designs. Xeric implies no added water. By definition, Xeriscape means some water applied in well-controlled amounts and locations in the landscape.

Xeriscape is actually a combination of seven common-sense gardening principles that save water while creating a lush and colorful landscape.

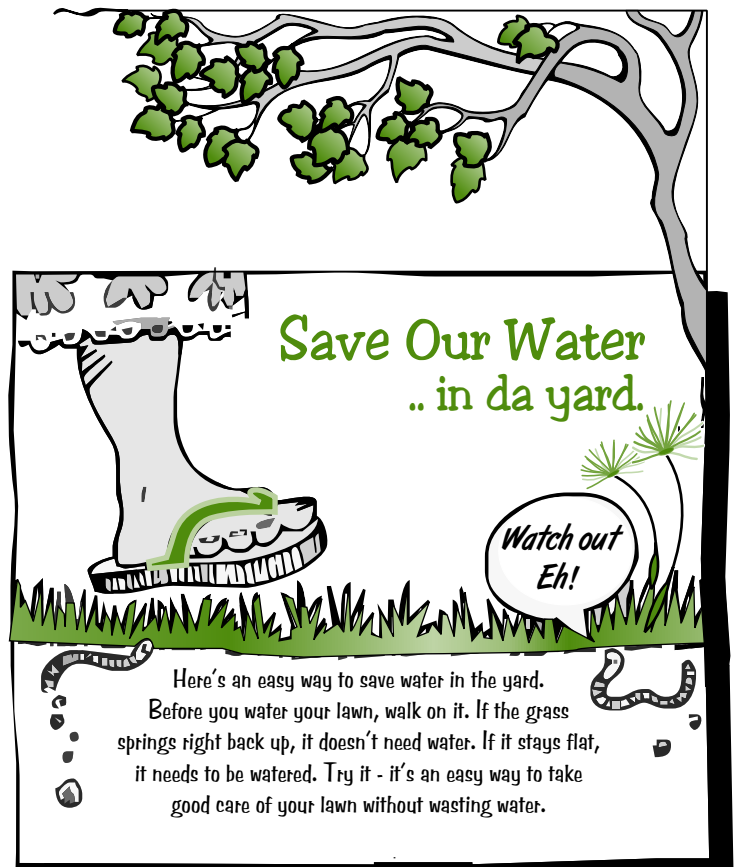
These Seven Fundamental Principles of Xeriscape are:

1. Plan and Design for water conservation and beauty from the start. Even though dry-only landscaping can be quite spectacularly colorful, and even lush, limited areas of more highly-watered landscape are completely consistent with wise water use.
2. Create practical turf areas of manageable sizes, shapes and appropriate grasses.
3. Select low water plants and group plants of similar water needs together.
4. Use soil amendments like compost as needed by site and type of plants
5. Use mulches to reduce evaporation and keep soil cool.
6. Irrigate efficiently with properly designed systems and by applying the right amount of water at the right time.
7. Maintain the landscape properly by mowing, weeding and fertilizing properly.

Although there are vast arrays of wonderful plants indigenous to all regions, non-invasive introduced plants, that are well-adapted to the local regional climate, are wonderful additions to landscaping that use water frugally. Well planned Xeriscapes are splendid examples of the beauty and diversity that make neighbors envious.

The City of Barstow encourages its residents and schools to explore the many benefits of Xeriscape.

If you are planning on starting up your own classroom garden, consider using Xeriscape to help teach your students about water conservation. For more information on Xeriscape, visit www.xeriscape.org



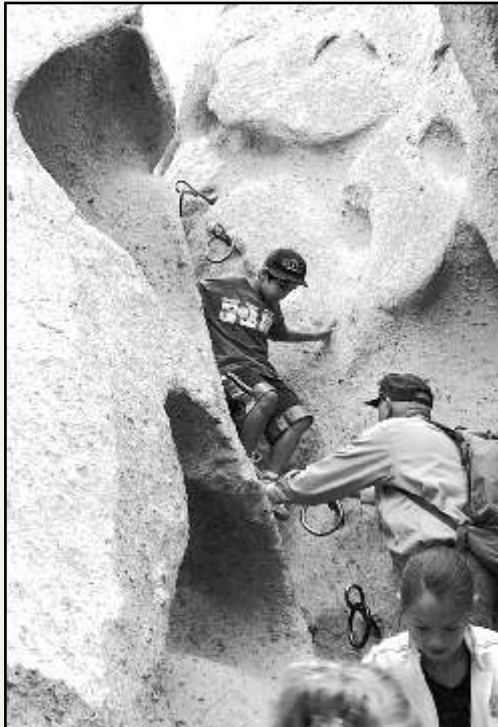
EnviroBus Buck Field Trips Continue to Roll

Twenty seven school bus loads of students took field trips to locales throughout the High Desert as part of MEEC's 2006/2007 EnviroBus Bucks program. Students from selected schools traveled to a variety of destinations including the Barstow Discovery Center, Hole in the Wall in the Mojave National Preserve, and Edwards Air Force Base to name a few.

MEEC's EnviroBus Bucks program provides transportation grants for teachers to take their students on environmental field trips and offers hands-on learning opportunities outside of the classroom.

The program provides funding for school bus trips to sites which emphasize environmental education.

"We have found that students who are able to learn via field trips gain a more concrete understanding of the lessons from the classroom,"



A student from Vista Colorado Elementary in Needles climbs through a rock fixture at Hole In The Wall in the Mojave National Preserve.

said Violette Roberts, MEEC Executive Board Chair. "MEEC is happy to be able to offer students a more hands-on, place-based approach to learning."

Since its inception in 2005, the EnviroBus Bucks program has continued to expand. In the 2007/2008 school year, MEEC Board members have approved an additional \$10,000 to provide even more field trips to High Desert schools.

"As more teachers find out about this free opportunity to expand learning opportunities for their students, we are getting more applications than we can handle," said Roberts. "We are working toward the day when every teacher that requests a trip can take one."

Applications for the 2007/2008 school year will be distributed in the early fall. The

application will also be available soon at www.meeconline.com.



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Not a MEEC
Teacher Yet?
Join Today...

It's **FREE!**

Join at www.meeconline.com





Winners of the Antelope Valley Illegal Dumping Task Force's essay contest gather for the awards ceremony in Lancaster on June 13, 2007. The essay contest - whose theme was "Illegal Dumping: More Than An Eyesore" attracted more than 300 entries from throughout the Mojave Desert area with three winners selected from four grade categories. Student winners from left to right are: Matthew Evans, Joy Learning Center, first place, grade K - 2, Sarabeth Lopez, Rancho Vista Elementary School, second place, grade 3 - 5, Ashley Armenta, second place, grade 6-8, Chloe Koslo, third place, grade 3-5, George Acosta, Joe Walker Middle School, first place, grade 6 - 8, Kyli Lucas, Mesa Grande Elementary School, third place, grade 6 - 8, Adam Rose, Desert Winds High School, first place, grade 9 - 12, and Jeremy Plant, Granite Hills High School, rear, second place, grade 9-12. Also pictured l - r: Rancho Vista Elementary School Principal Paula Sour, and teachers Linda Lotzgesell and Emily Ellsworth from Rancho Vista Elementary and Joe Walker Middle Schools respectively. Not pictured are K - 2 second and third place winners Antonio Garcia, Carmel Elementary School and Abigail Van Wyk, Keystone Elementary School; grade 3 - 5 first place winner Bethany Delatore, St. Timothy's School; and grade 9 - 12 third place winner Steven Maltman, Granite Hills High School. The "More Than an Eyesore" essay contest was sponsored by the Antelope Valley Illegal Dumping Task Force and the Mojave Environmental Education Consortium.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER



Aaron Walker

Hello to everyone!

Although I've met many of you personally already, I wanted to take a moment to formally introduce myself so you can put a face with the e-mails.

I am Aaron Walker, Program Specialist for the MEEC program, working out of the offices of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District to help bring teachers together with state standards — based environmental educational curriculum for use in High Desert classrooms.

In my short time here, I've learned a lot and hope to be a vital link between you — the teacher — and the many opportunities, programs, grants, contests, conferences and curriculum that MEEC offers, as well as the state-wide CREEC Network for a long time to come.

I was formerly with the Daily Press in Victorville for four and a half years before joining MEEC. Prior to the Daily Press, I worked at newspapers in my hometown of Philadelphia, PA, and in New Mexico and New York. While I've always enjoyed journalism, I have also had the privilege of working closely with youth in directing various after school programs, days camps, church youth groups and Saturday programs for the Philadelphia Family of YMCA's and the Philadelphia Boys and Girls Clubs.

I invite you to let me know how MEEC can better serve your needs and the needs of your students. Please feel free to stop by and say hello, browse and borrow teaching materials from our environmental library or with any other request, tips and suggestions for improving MEEC's resource services to you, the teacher.

Over the summer break, I will be delving more into the wonderful opportunities MEEC offers as we prepare to recruit more sponsors to expand our program to better serve you.

Have a great summer; I look forward to working with you in the fall. Aaron



Four Mojave Desert teachers are being sponsored by MEEC to attend the annual Keystone Center's Key Issues Institute this summer.

Glen Baumbach of Lancaster High School in Lancaster, Kira Brown of Park View Middle School in Lancaster, Cammy Henderson of Shadow Hills Intermediate in Palmdale, and Barbara Jacobs of Hesperia Junior High in Hesperia were selected for the all expense paid, intensive six-day environmental education training in Silverthorne, Colorado.

"Key Issues: Bringing Environmental Issues to the Classroom" provides teachers with training in an interdisciplinary, standards-based approach to investigating current environmental issues with their students, using the Keystone framework.

"Each year, MEEC is happy to offer this free resource to help teachers better incorporate environmental learning into their classrooms," said Michael Haro, MEEC Executive Board member and Lockheed Martin Aeronautics representative. "The Keystone Institute is nationally recognized for their instructional process that seeks to equip teachers with practical and proven curriculum for immediate implementation for the benefits of their students."

Archaeology comes alive during workshop at Edwards AFB

More than 30 educators had the opportunity to learn about archaeology in the High Desert when MEEC, in conjunction with the Environmental Management offices at Edwards Air Force Base, hosted the "Uncovering the Desert's Past" workshop for teachers of grades 3 – 8 on February 22nd.

The free workshop included a tour of the famed Pancho Barnes "Happy Bottom Riding Club" archaeological site as well as a hands-on lesson using items from local digs to help teachers learn to integrate archaeology.

"I felt the best part of the tour was learning about the preservation of the desert and its history," Dian Hare said. Hare teaches fifth grade at Barstow Intermediate School.

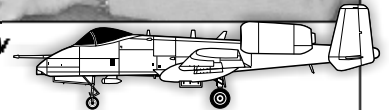
Cole Parker, a 13 year veteran archaeologist contractor for Edwards AFB, presented during the event and shared many of his experiences with the teachers.

"Pancho Barnes' site and the old town of Muroc are both protected as non-National Register eligible sites," Parker shared with the teachers.

"I've always wanted to see Pancho's site and get an explanation of the archaeological significance, more than what you can get in a book," said Steve Abele, a 30 year teacher currently teaching at Branch Elementary school.



Teachers look over descriptions of items as they try and identify artifacts from a recent archaeology dig during the "Uncovering the Desert's Past" workshop at Edwards Air Force Base.



In addition to the guided tour, Parker presented the teachers with a sampling of some of the artifacts uncovered at a recent Muroc dig and asked them to identify them. Some were easy but others had everyone scratching their heads guessing what they were.

"The work of historians and archaeologists many times overlap," Parker said, "however, they differ in that historians study persons, places and events. Archaeologists study people, culture and adaptation."

Workshop participants also received curriculum developed by the Smithsonian Institute including lesson plans that

meet national standards for science and history to help students explore the past through archaeology.

"Edwards AFB is one of our most passionate partners, always excited to bring people to the base," said Violette Roberts, Executive Board Chair of MEEC.



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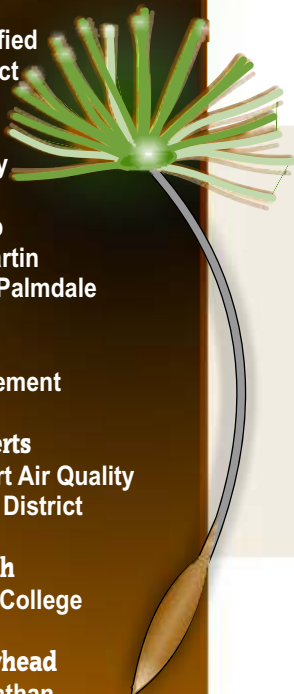
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Antelope Valley AQMD	Two
City of Barstow	Two
Edwards AFB	Two
High Desert Power Project	Three
Lockheed Martin Aeronautics/Palmdale	Two
Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District	Five
City of Palmdale	Two
San Bernardino County Fire Department	Three

PLATINUM

Town of Apple Valley	Three
California Portland Cement	One
Cement Industry Environmental Consortium	Five
Cemex	Five
L.A. County Sanitation Districts	One
Mitsubishi Cement	Five
Molycorp, Inc.	Two
TXI Riverside Cement	Five

GOLD

City of Adelanto	Two
Air & Waste Management Association, Mojave Chapter	Five
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Daily Press	Five
Elementis Specialties	Two
Ft. Irwin, Dept. of the Army	Three
The Gas Company	Two
City of Hesperia	Five
Inland Energy	Two
Mojave Water Agency	Five
City of Needles	One
Northrop Grumman	Two
Omya of California	Two
Southern California Edison	Three
Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority	Three
Waste Management of the Antelope Valley	One

SILVER

AFG Glass	Five
Boeing	Two
Searles Valley Minerals	Two
City of Victorville	Three
Women in Mining	Four

BRONZE

Antelope Valley Press	Two
Desert Community Bank	Two
Southern California Aviation	Three
Southwest Gas	Five
Victor Valley Transit Authority	Three



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