



Central Texas Green Schools Challenge

For Immediate Release

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Green Schools Awards Go to Williams, Brentwood and Cunningham Elementaries in Austin and Hawthorne, Lamar and Martin Elementaries in San Antonio

Austin, TX. April 15, 2014. A Partnership of the U. S. Green Building Council Central Texas Chapter and the National Wildlife Federation's EcoSchools USA Program, the Central Texas Green Schools Challenge culminated with the selection of three top-performing schools each in Austin and San Antonio.

The Green Schools Challenge is a friendly competition among elementary schools in the Central Texas region through which teams of 4th and 5th grade students learn about common sustainability concepts, then work to devise and implement the most creative, effective and low-cost practices in their schools. Mentors from the design/build community who are volunteers with the USGBC Central Texas Chapter deliver a modified version of the EcoSchools curriculum during after-school meetings throughout the year.

The goals of the program include energizing a sustainability curriculum in the school systems, promoting environmental stewardship within local communities, lowering school operating and maintenance costs and reducing their carbon footprints. "Through the Eco-Schools curriculum students learn by putting science and math concepts to work greening their schools," said Marya Fowler, National Wildlife Federation Senior Education Manager. "When students see that they can improve their schools, they see that they can also improve their communities and homes and become the spokespeople for their ideas."

The Green Schools Challenge was launched in the 2013-2014 academic year with grant support from the Edouard Foundation and Google. Monetary awards, which the students can use to continue or expand on their campus projects, will be officially presented to the schools during AISD, SAISD and NISD school board meetings in May.

"We're extremely proud of all of the schools that participated this year," said Denise Shaw, USGBC Central Texas Green Schools Committee Chair. "Thanks to programs like this, students have a better understanding of the big changes they can make by becoming involved in their community. The students' energy and enthusiasm was inspiring for Challenge Mentors and Jurors alike. We look forward to continuing this program for years to come!"

Winning teams and the highlights of their projects include:

AUSTIN:

Williams Elementary (1st Place): Made a measurable difference in the school's waste consumption and effectively involved the community including outreach to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Crockett High School and Keep Austin Beautiful.

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Brentwood Elementary (2nd Place): Implemented a lighting efficiency project and effectively presented data related to the pounds of CO₂ saved pre- and post-project and committed to extending the project beyond its initial scope.

Cunningham Elementary (3rd Place): Developed and creatively presented a sustainability action plan to Reuse, Reduce, Recycle and even Up-cycle at their school at a school-wide assembly and led official adoption of their Eco-Code.

SAN ANTONIO:

Hawthorne Elementary (1st Place): Calculated the current biodiversity index of the school campus then built a garden to attract birds, bees and butterflies and increase both plant and wildlife diversity at their school.

Lamar Elementary (2nd Place): Used a carbon calculator to illustrate the impact their energy consumption-reducing actions could have at the school and created a plan to involve the whole campus next year.

Martin Elementary (3rd Place): Created a garden using native plants and pulled in high school students and parent volunteers to increase involvement across the community.

About USGBC Central Texas

Founded in 2003, USGBC Central Texas-Balcones Chapter is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes the use of green building and sustainable development practices in a 72-county region. The Chapter's activities include monthly meetings, state and local advocacy, a green schools program and a market-supporting green building resources directory. Chapter membership includes building and associated industry professionals in Central and South Texas. For more information on the Green Schools Challenge, visit usgbc-centraltexas.org/green-schools-challenge.

About The National Wildlife Federation

Founded in 1936, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is one of the nation's oldest and most respected conservation, education and advocacy organizations. NWF's mission is to inspire Americans to protect wildlife and natural resources for our children's future and to inspire the next generation of conservationists. We promote environment-based learning as an approach to prepare our youth with 21st Century technical and scientific skills for a greener and more sustainable economy. For more information on Eco-Schools USA, visit nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA.aspx