

Presentation of the NAAEE Walter E. Jeske Award, 2006

By Elaine Andrews, NAAEE 2005 Walter E. Jeske Award winner

The *Walter E. Jeske Award* is the highest honor NAAEE bestows. This award was established to honor Walt Jeske, Chief of the Education and Publications Unit with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Jeske was a dedicated member of the NAAEE Board of Directors and an outstanding environmental educator until his untimely death in 1983 at the age of 54. The award is given to recognize service to NAAEE and leadership within the field of environmental education.

I wonder how many NAAEE members know that Walt Jeske began his career teaching vocational agriculture in Iowa. He followed his nine-years of teaching with an appointment as editor of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* and a leadership role with the Soil Conservation Society of America. That led to a position as head of the information and public affairs staff for the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, and finally to executive vice-president of the Soil Conservation Society of America. Walt was a founder of the Alliance for Environmental Education in 1973, and chair of the Subcommittee on Environmental Education for the Federal Interagency Committee on Education, from 1977-81. In that capacity, Walt served as a delegate to the UNESCO-United Nations Environmental Education Program Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education held in Tbilisi, Soviet Union, in 1977. In 1982, the then **National** Association for Environmental Education, NAAEE, named its distinguished service award in his honor. (Disinger, 1985)

Walt's shoes are hard to fill. But our 2006 award winner is being honored for similar tireless and long-standing efforts on behalf of the field of environmental education and NAAEE. He is an exemplary teacher who has been actively engaged in helping people understand environmental concepts for more than thirty-five years. A colleague often shares that our winner is the most naturally gifted teacher he has ever known. He creates for all learners an atmosphere of adventure, inquiry, and a love for learning. He believes in the power of teaching and learning, in the concept and practice of community building, and in the importance of nurturing and listening. To him the path is not only more important than the endpoint, but the road to making our earth a better place is through environmental education that is personally meaningful.

Our 2006 winner is Dr. Terry Wilson. I'd like to take a few minutes to tell you more about Terry.

Terry has served NAAEE in many capacities. He served as a Board member and more recently as President, during a time of transition for the organization. This considerable commitment exemplifies my reference to his "tireless" efforts. Terry's calm, respectful approach brought Board members together and helped to create a positive motion forward for the organization. Among other activities, Terry led a project, along with NAAEE Past Presidents Joe Baust and Bora Simmons, to initiate a relationship with NCATE, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Upon completing his term as President, Terry became NAAEE's official liaison to NCATE and now works with an NAAEE Writing Team to develop

program standards for the preparation of environmental education teachers at colleges and universities.

Beyond Terry's teaching prowess and work for NAAEE is a vast network of his connections critical in elevating environmental education. Terry was the second director of the Center for Environmental Education at Murray State University in 1978. This Center, with Terry's encouragement, was used as a model to create seventeen other centers for environmental education in the Tennessee Valley.

When he moved to Western KY University he took on a more expansive role as the Director of the Center for Math, Science, and Environmental Education. During the interview for the job he requested an opportunity to teach at the undergraduate level – his first love and of course his gift to the field. As director of the Western KY University Center he crafted an endorsement of a teaching certificate in environmental education and was among those who convinced the teacher licensing agency in Kentucky to support this certification statewide.

In his career, Terry has been involved in numerous projects that bring together different colleges and faculty through environmental education. His work with interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary efforts at Western KY University has been significant as a model for other universities. Terry is one of three instructors for the Non-Formal Certification Program in Kentucky, designing and delivering the instruction that meets NAAEE Standards. His encouragement of the statewide network of centers to work together for the greater good of the Commonwealth has been essential in building a sense of

community necessary to support environmental education for all educators in Kentucky.

Terry's work and commitment with NCATE and the revised environmental education standards, his work with the Non-Formal Certification in Kentucky and with the Centers for Environmental Education across the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and his work with Projects WILD, PLT, Project Food Land and People and numerous other programs and projects demonstrate his commitment to improving environmental education. He achieves success by using his teaching lens, trusting in the power of people to change, and acknowledging others in positive and meaningful ways. His success lies in his ability to bring his teaching skill to all aspects of his professional life.

I am particularly pleased to be the person who presents the Walter Jeske Award to Terry. I can personally testify to Terry's good humor and positive point of view when on the job, and to his ability to help NAAEE focus on new directions for the Association. Terry served as President-elect during my year as President, and as President during my first year as Executive Director. A personal THANK YOU and congratulations from me. It would have been a lot less fun without your support, Terry.

Today we celebrate Terry's service to NAAEE, his teaching about and for the environment, and his numerous other contributions to the field of environmental education by awarding NAAEE's Walter Jeske Award for 2006.

REFERENCE

Disinger, John. F. 1985. National Leaders of American Conservation, Richard H. Stroud, editor. Sponsored by the Natural Resources Council of America. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.