



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR PAT QUINN

# NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
Tuesday, December 29, 2009

**CONTACT:** Robert Reed (o. 312-814-3158; c. 312-203-5722)  
Grant Klinzman (o. 312-814-3158; c. 217-299-2448)

## **Governor Quinn Announces 2009 Environmental Hero Awards**

### *Annual Awards Given for Work to Improve and Protect Environment*

CHICAGO – December 29, 2009. Governor Pat Quinn today awarded 22 individuals and groups from across Illinois with 2009 Environmental Hero Awards. The annual award is given in recognition of a strong commitment to the health and protection of the environment in Illinois.

“This year’s honorees are Illinois’ true environmental heroes,” said Governor Quinn. “I am proud to salute them for their work to make the Land of Lincoln a cleaner, greener and better place for everyone.”

The 2009 Illinois Environmental Hero Award recipients include the following individuals and groups:

- **Walter Bush IV** is the Education and Employment Manager for the Bronzeville Green project in Chicago, which employs formerly homeless adults in community gardens and environmentally friendly landscaping projects. Bush works tirelessly to help these individuals build green job skills to achieve self-sufficiency.
- **Ray Coleman**, principal of St. Monica Academy in Chicago, brought together his students, faculty and community to make environmentally sustainable upgrades to the school grounds, including installing a permeable play lot, creating a greenhouse and planting native flowers and trees.
- **Garry Griffith** is the director of dining at Augustana College and has spearheaded the school’s Farm-to-Fork initiative, where students work on local farms to produce crops used in the college’s dining system. Also through Griffith’s efforts, over 80,000 pounds of food waste is composted annually into local farmland, and the school’s used cooking oil is converted into biodiesel to power farm equipment.
- **Jack Harrier** of Danville is the Head Custodian at Danville School District 118. He has saved the district nearly one million dollars by making sure lights and electronics are powered down at night, and by installing energy efficient retrofits to buildings, all while involving Danville students in his conservation efforts.
- **Debbie Hillman** is a co-founder of the Evanston Food Policy Council and lobbied aggressively for the passage of the Food, Farms, and Jobs Act of 2007. She is also a coordinator on the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force. Hillman was a professional gardener for 32 years.

-MORE-



- **Michael Howard** is the founder and executive director of Eden's Place Nature Center, which offers youth on Chicago's South Side a place to learn about native gardening and local farming. The classes also incorporate science, writing and art into conservation lessons.
- **Madiem Kawa** is the founder and leader of the Washington Park Conservancy. Through the Conservancy, she coordinates Washington Park GreenKids and Teen Ecological Adventure, two hands-on educational programs that inspire and train youth to be stewards of woodland, wetland, and prairie habitats.
- **John Kidd** founded Fishin' Buddies!, a non-profit organization that teaches over 1,000 Chicago students each year about wildlife conservation, prairie restoration and plant identification, while reinforcing reading and writing skills.
- **Chris Koos**, Mayor of Normal, has led the Uptown neighborhood in creating a pedestrian-friendly community that has attracted Fortune 500 companies and over \$200 million in private investment. Uptown is the first neighborhood in the country to require LEED certification for new buildings.
- **Ben Magers and Kirstin Blackford** of Paxton were the only youth that attended the 2009 Department of Natural Resources Conservation Congress. They were elected as two of eight students to serve on the Pheasants Forever Youth Leadership Council, which helps young people become the next generation of conservation leaders.
- **Mother McAuley (Chicago) and Thornridge High School (Dolton) students** are partnering to teach residents of Pinchon, Haiti how to make renewable biodiesel. They are also building a biodiesel processor to ship to the remote town and creating reassembly instructions in French.
- **Julie Nold** teaches Spanish at Loyola Academy in Wilmette and is the faculty supervisor for the ecology club SAVE (Students Against Violating the Earth). She organizes club members and other students to pick up recyclables from the community every week and takes students on tours of the Elk Grove Village recycling center to see where their recyclables go.
- **Orland Park's Green Team** is a group of youth and adults that visit area businesses to provide suggestions on how each can make their operations more energy efficient, water efficient, and cost effective. The team is supervised by Nancy Flores and gives businesses a special decal they can display in recognition of their involvement.
- **L.H. Bert Princen** (1930-2008) was director of the USDA Research Center in Peoria and conducted the National Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in Illinois since 1962. After his success, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources asked Princen to coordinate spring bird counts in Peoria starting in 1972. Princen was an acclaimed scientist, outdoor enthusiast, bird expert, musician and educator, and was known to many as "the Bird Man of Peoria."
- **Debbie Raboin** is a teacher at O'Fallon Township High School. She partnered with state agencies and the Illinois Innovation Talent Pilot Program to have her students design a house for a local sustainable development that is eco-friendly, cost effective, appealing and marketable.



- **Dinah Ramirez** opened and directs Healthy Southeast Chicago, a group that works with the Chicago Department of Environment and other partner organizations toward progressive, holistic, and environmentally sustainable solutions to health disparities in the Latino community.
- **Polly Rerko Dixon** is a parent at Wild Rose Elementary school in St. Charles who started a vehicle anti-idling initiative. She has worked with administrators and other parents to develop their own environmental initiatives, which have greatly improved air quality around schools.
- **Gary Swick** teaches science at Dundee-Crown High School in Carpentersville. Over his 32 years of teaching, he has worked with his students to develop their own environmental science curriculum, which they also provide to other schools and legislators. His students have been responsible for numerous local initiatives, including open space referendums, erosion control ordinances and groundwater surveys.
- **Tamara Tyszko** of Plainfield started Lakewood Falls Elementary School's first recycling program. During the kick-off recycling campaign, she encouraged students with no recycling services at home to bring their recyclables to school. Through her efforts, Tyszko earned the reputation for getting students excited about conserving the planet and making recycling "cool."
- **Bill Volk** is the Managing Director of the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) where he worked to develop diesel emission particulate filters now used on 50 buses. MTD also uses green cleaning products and reuses rainwater to wash its fleet.
- **Mark Wizniak** is a senior engineer at ComEd in Oak Brook where he partnered with state agencies and the Illinois Innovation Talent Pilot Program on an initiative to enlist high school students and their teachers to perform energy audits in their schools. The effort is intended to boost efficiency and reduce operating costs.
- **Margie Woods** of Joliet is a former member of the Will County Board and championed the efforts of the Ridgewood subdivision to receive Illinois EPA revolving funds for improving the community's sewage and drinking water infrastructure.

The Environmental Hero Awards are made out of bamboo and were donated by Illinois Correctional Industries at Menard. For more information about Governor Quinn's green initiatives, please visit [green.illinois.gov](http://green.illinois.gov).

###