



Chesapeake Bay Trust Announces its 2017 Annual Award and Scholarship Winners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Annapolis, MD) January 12, 2017 – The Chesapeake Bay Trust will announce the recipients of its 2017 Annual Awards and Scholarship Program at a ceremony held in the Maryland General Assembly tomorrow evening. During the event, more than 150 environmental leaders will join Maryland legislators to honor six exceptional teachers, students, and individuals for their outstanding contributions to environmental education, watershed restoration, and volunteerism. Launched in 1998, the Chesapeake Bay Trust's Annual Awards Program recognizes awardees each year for a variety of environmental leadership roles and achievements.

"I am honored to recognize this year's awardees for their tremendous work and dedication," said Dr. Jana Davis, executive director of the Chesapeake Bay Trust. "These humble individuals are working every day to make a difference in our communities and for our bays, rivers, streams, forests and parks. The leaders, teachers, students, and volunteers winning awards and scholarships tonight are to be applauded for their exceptional contributions as we all work together to restore the natural resources of our region."

Chesapeake Bay Trust's 2017 Award Winners

2017 Educator of the Year: Ophelia M. Barizo *Highland View Academy, Washington County*

The Environmental Educator of the Year is awarded to a K-12 educator who has shown an outstanding commitment to environmental education. Ophelia Barizo, Hons. BS, MS, is a successful educator with many years of experience in innovative classroom teaching, curriculum development, and grant-writing for K-12 science projects and other educational opportunities. She is now Vice Principal for Advancement and STEM Coordinator for Highland View Academy, after serving as an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellow at the Office of Emerging Frontiers in Research and Innovation, Engineering Directorate, at the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a year. She has been responsible for bringing in almost \$800,000.00 in grant funds for Highland View Academy. Her Toyota Tapestry project was featured in the 2011 Pearson Environmental Science textbook, "Your World, Your Turn."

2017 Student of the Year: Claire Wayner *Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, Baltimore County*

Claire is a senior at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. She is passionate about conservation and environmental issues and strives to get her voice heard. Claire's environmental stewardship began along an urban stream near her house called Stony Run. She would explore Stony Run with friends, catching tadpoles and making maps of the area. Her love for the stream led her to be trained as an Adopt-a-Stream volunteer in 2013 with Blue Water Baltimore, and she then began to organize community events in 2014 such as stream cleanups and invasive plant removals. This grew into a community group, which she founded, in 2015 called the North Stony Run Green Team. She welcomes volunteers from local schools, using service events as educational opportunities to teach about the importance of greening streams. The Student of the Year, an award that is accompanied by a \$5,000 scholarship to be used for education, is a high school or college student who motivates and inspires other students by promoting awareness of natural resources and participating in efforts to improve the environment at school or in the community.

2017 The Honorable Arthur Dorman Scholarship: Micayla Velez *Harford Community College, Harford County*

Micayla Velez is a first-year student at Harford Community College. She graduated in 2016 from North Harford High School, a magnet school for plant science. Her interest in science led her to learn a great deal about the plight of bees and pollinator species in general, in perilous decline worldwide, and a desire become a beekeeper. Soon thereafter, she received the Susquehanna Beekeepers Association Youth grant to start a bee colony and research apiculture. She has been invited to give presentations to schools, Boys and Girls Club, Linking All So Others Succeed (LASOS), Harford County Farm Fair, and the Maryland State Fair. Illustrating the power of her presentations, three other students have received funding to start bee colonies, and the Boys and Girls Club built a community garden with bee hives. The Dorman Scholarship was named in honor of the late Senator Arthur Dorman

who worked tirelessly to engage a wide audience in natural resource issues. This award honors a student of color who works to improve his or her community and environment and provides a \$5,000 scholarship to be used for educational purposes.

2017 Commercial Stewards Award: Behnke Nurseries

Prince George's County

This award, established to honor previous Chairpersons of the Chesapeake Bay Trust, recognizes an outstanding corporate or commercial entity that strives to make a difference in the community, has made a significant contribution to natural resource restoration and protection in the Chesapeake region, and engages its employees and members of the community in environmental issues. Behnke Nurseries has been devoted to environmental stewardship as a company in many ways. First, they have been a leader since 2008 in promoting the use of and educating the community about native plants through their "BaySafe Plants Program." Second, Behnke has integrated environmental stewardship into their business practices through responsible procurement and marketing. Third, they practice what they preach, implementing an array of innovative practices on their own property, examples of all seven of the Prince George's County Raincheck Rebate practices, which serve to educate their staff and link the public to rebate opportunities. Finally, Behnke frequently partners with other community organizations to further environmental initiatives.

2017 Melanie Teems Award: READY Program/Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Howard and Anne Arundel Counties

Named after the longest-serving staff member of the Trust, this award recognizes an exemplary project or program that engages residents in efforts to improve the region's natural resources, serving as a model for other organizations. Initiated in Howard County but expanded to Anne Arundel, the Restoring the Environment and Developing Youth (READY) is a program that combines green job creation for young adults with improvement of watershed health through stormwater and other services. The potential for such a program was developed by three key partners, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, People Acting Together in Howard (PATH) and Howard County. The Howard County segment of the program has been extremely successful with more than 160 hires made, and these young people have constructed and/or maintained over 100 rain gardens, managed 50 acres of forest conservation easement property, and implemented a debris management effort to mitigate flood damage. The Anne Arundel READY Program was piloted in 2015 and has hired 15 young adults for similar work. The program has evolved from providing summer opportunities for high school and college students to employing a year round crew who engage in more skills development as they provide benefits to the local community.

2017 Ellen Fraites Wagner Award: Timothy D. Junkin

Founder/Advisory, Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy, Talbot County

Ellen Fraites Wagner, a colleague of Governor Harry Hughes, helped establish the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and this award, named in her honor, recognizes a natural resources leader who works or volunteers to motivate and inspire others by promoting environmental awareness. This description perfectly fits Tim Junkin. Tim is the founder of the Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC) and served as executive director for its first seven years. Tim Junkin left a successful career as a Washington, DC, lawyer and author, to return to his boyhood home of Easton to work on river and bay restoration issues. He realized the Choptank, the largest river feeding the Chesapeake Bay from the Eastern Shore and one of the most impaired in the state, needed help. That first year, he inspired enough financial support to establish an office, hire a full time Choptank Riverkeeper, refurbish an old workboat to patrol the river, and begin to build the organization. He worked tirelessly, speaking to every public gathering that would listen, writing countless articles for newspapers, magazines, and newsletters, and devoting himself to educating the Eastern Shore communities about water pollution issues. In the following years, Tim expanded MRC's mission to include a Miles and Wye program; doubled twice the staff size, providing jobs; and developed a membership of thousands. The success of his organization is a testament to his ability to inspire others.

For more information on the Chesapeake Bay Trust, visit www.cbtrust.org. With requests for photos and/or contact information of the awardees, please contact Jenny Kley at jkley@cbtrust.org or 410.974.2941, Ext. 113.



About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Chesapeake Bay Trust (www.cbtrust.org) is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to improving the natural resources of Maryland and the Chesapeake region through environmental education, community engagement, and local watershed restoration. Since 1985, the Trust has awarded \$80 million in grants and engaged hundreds of thousands of individuals in projects that have a measurable impact on the waterways and other natural resources of the region. The Trust is supported by the sale of the Maryland Treasure the Chesapeake license plate, donations to the Chesapeake Bay and Endangered Species Fund on the Maryland State income tax form, donations from individuals and corporations, and partnerships with private foundations and federal and state agencies. Fully 92 percent of the Trust's expenditures are directed to its restoration and education programs.