

National Wildlife Federation certifies Hudson school yard

By FROM STAFF REPORTS

Posted Sep 19, 2017 at 2:35 PM

The National Wildlife Federation, America's largest wildlife conservation and education organization, recognizes Seton Catholic School in Hudson for successfully creating a certified "Schoolyard Habitat" through its Garden for Wildlife program.

Seton Catholic joins more than 5,000 schools nationwide that have transformed their school yards into thriving wildlife habitats, providing essential elements needed by all wildlife — natural food sources, clean water, cover and places to raise young. The habitat also serves as an outdoor education site where students can engage in learning in a hands-on way. Certification also makes a habitat part of the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge, a national effort to restore critical habitat for pollinators.

"We are excited to have another school join our growing list of more than 5,000 certified Schoolyard Habitats. Kids can now personally experience nature through hands-on learning in an outdoor environment," said Liz Soper, director of K-12 programs for the National Wildlife Federation.

"I am excited to provide curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students to practice environmental stewardship, including invasive species reclamation, establishing pollinator gardens and exploring local biodiversity," says Dr. Anne Schoeffler, Seton Middle School science teacher.

Schoeffler says the Seton gardens, so far, include a reclaimed pond and a pollinator garden. Using GAR Educator Initiative Grant funds, the school has removed the invasive monoculture in the retention basin and established native riparian (wetland) plants. There are reptile, amphibian and insect populations, as well as itinerant great blue herons. Native fish species will be introduced this year as well.

“At the same time, we planted our first pollinator garden, using seeds and plugs of native plants,” she says. “We can see our garden change seasonally as the flowers and grasses bloom throughout the spring, summer and fall. The middle school students continue to visit these habitats for lessons that address plant and insect biodiversity, plant growth and carbon capture and water quality assessment.

Schoeffler says the classes also exploit the interpretive trail that connects Seton to Hudson Springs Park. In a new initiative, Seton has established a middle school garden club which, partnering with the kindergarten students, will establish a new pollinator garden. The garden club students have also applied for grant money to build and establish a vegetable garden and a nestbox trail for cavity nesting birds.

“Our goal is to make our campus a welcoming habitat for wildlife and students alike!” Schoeffler said.

NWF’s Garden for Wildlife program encourages planting with native species like milkweed and discouraging chemical pesticide use. With nearly 200,000 locations and growing, NWF’s Certified Wildlife Habitats and Community Wildlife Habitats recognize individuals, schools, groups and whole communities committed to providing habitat for wildlife, including pollinators. For more information visit www.nwf.org/habitat or call 1-800-822-9919.



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