

Siegler honored for green efforts with Patwin kids

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Joannie Siegler has had a passion and a commitment to reduce the negative human impact on the environment for many years. Now, she's being honored for her leadership in environmental programs at Patwin Elementary School.

Siegler received the Orville and Erna Thompson Award for Outstanding Garden-Based Learning at the fifth annual Village Feast in August. The award comes with a \$500 stipend.

Siegler said she never realized when she received her master's degree in nutritional biochemistry from Cornell University in 1982 that she would be spending time with elementary students training them how to divert, sort and recycle for the DavisRISE Program, and coaching them in the benefits of gardening as a life skill.

She is an advocate for improving the quality of everyday living for the long term. For a few years, she ran an after-school environmental club, PEACE (Patwin's Environmental Awareness Club for Everyone), that introduced students to environmental concepts and the role each of them has in giving the Earth a good turn. Hands-on experiments, field trips and Earth-friendly games were the basis of the club.

Siegler has worked with students on a daily basis to develop ways to motivate them and their parents to be more aware of waste and how they can make a positive impact in their school and home environment.

She champions waste-free lunches and rewards students who bring them to school. In addition to aerobic composting of the fruit and vegetable waste, she has introduced worm composting to the students. They get to see first-hand, over the course of the year, the worm bins slowly filling up with soil as the worms have a feast on the food scraps.

This year, she also is working as the garden coordinator for Patwin, which allows her to "complete the cycle" of composted food waste enriching the soil to nourish the plants that provide the food people eat. She gives recycling and garden updates in the school newsletter to keep parents and students informed of school progress in these areas.

Siegler is always looking for that teachable moment in the lives of children, says Julie Barrett, the Davis Farm to School Connection's interim program coordinator.

"I enjoy working with children and figure that I can have an impact on the youth that could have far reaching results," Siegler said in the news release. "I'm hoping that the concern I show and the direction I give to the students will lead them to be more aware of the consequences of their actions, such that they can make intelligent choices in the future."

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