November 30, 2005

Pamela Holz
IAN/ICEC Awards Committee
P.o. Box 889, Courthouse
Washington, IA 52353

Dear Ms. Holz:

I am interested in recognizing Kevin Farmer, Principal, West Elementary School for his excellence as an environmental educator. I have had the opportunity to work with Kevin for the last 4 years as a volunteer instructor at the 6th Grade Science Camp for Glenwood Community Schools. As an Environmental Specialist in southwest Iowa I greatly appreciate the importance of this camp and the impact it has on these youth. The purpose of this letter is to explain the worthiness of Kevin Farmer as a nominee for the Chris Holt Youth Environmental Educator Award.

History of Camp

This year the camp celebrated its 5th year of educating youth about the environment. This year was also pivotal as many of the high school counselors, once students at camp, returned for the first time to enjoy it in a new role. In talking to Kevin he explained that he wanted to create a program similar to one he was involved with in a previous position with another school district. He said that there was a real opportunity to start something "great for the kids and the community". He told me he wants "camp" to be his legacy as he moves on to continue his career in education. The foundation has been laid and the support of camp has grown each year since its inception. I believe Science Camp will indeed be one of Mr. Farmer's legacies.

The Setting

The science camp is held at Camp Neyati, a Girl Scout camp located northwest of Glenwood and nestled in the beautiful Loess Hills. There isn't much that matches the perfect landscape of old oaks, established prairie and the noble hills which surround the camp. There are cabins situated around either side of a small creek, which proves to be a very useful tool in teaching the kids about healthy streams.

Activities

The activities at camp cover many aspects of science but are structured around concepts of conservation and environmental protection. All of the activities focus on the fun of understanding the natural world and learning in the outdoor classroom. Year to year the activities vary slightly, however many activities are repeated and have only improved over the last 5 years. These activities include: Pond Study, Prairie and the Loess Hills, Predator and Prey Relationships, Sensing Nature, DNR Loess Hills Stream

Demonstration Trailer, Outdoor Art, Casting, Fishing, Canoeing, Team Building, Astronomy, Night Hike, Campfire Storytelling and Campfire Singing.

Summary

I have enclosed information which is used to help inform parents and sponsors about the Science Camp and its counterpart Drama Camp. There are a few pictures which help form a glimpse into life at camp. I also believe the brochure accurately describes camp as "a highly educational experience for the students". Camp has become something the younger children long to experience as pinnacle moment for these pre-middle schoolers. The camp is non-exclusive, everyone is encouraged to attend. There is no cost and camp is accessible to every student no matter the ability.

I have also enclosed a picture of Kevin at my station "the Loess Hills Stream Demonstration Trailer". I will add that it was very difficult getting him to stop fur a picture as he was busy ensuring every detail of camp was in order.

There are many people who contribute to the success of camp including faculty, school staff, parents, as well as many groups that provide instructors such as the DNR and Mills County Extension, but Kevin is tireless in making it a memorable experience for the kids, and his enthusiasm is unmatched. Please consider Kevin Farmer for the Chris Holt Youth Environmental Educator Award.

If you have any questions or need any other information please feel free to contact me via email at thad.nanfito@dnr.state.ia.usor by phone at 712-243-1934.
Thank you

Thad Nanfito
Environmental Specialist
Field Services and Compliance

Enc. (2) Photographs
Camp Week 2004 Brochure
Camp Week 2005 Brochure