November 30, 2005

Ms. Heidi Anderson
Polk County Conservation Board
11407 NW Jester Park Drive
Granger, IA 50109

RE: Ding Darling EE Award

Dear Ms. Anderson:

I appreciate this opportunity to nominate U.I. Wild for this prestigious award. The programs include: Wildlife Camps, Hawk Migration Studies, Macbride Raptor Project and the School of the Wild, all coordinated by Edward Saehler and Jodeane Cancilla at the University of Iowa. Despite budget cuts, the EE Programs continue to provide exemplary educational opportunities for students (K-12), pre-service elementary and secondary teacher education students, teachers, and the public at large.

The School of the Wild directly influences local and regional teachers, students, administrators, and parents. These formal EE on-site activities systemically impact school systems by promoting environmentally sound practices within the context of a modern technological society. Their efforts have been most impressive. The Wildlife Camps extend these school day field studies by providing hands-on experiences, and in-depth perspective of the local ecological systems at the 480 acre Field Campus. Together, these formal educational programs have continued to provide a solid ecological foundation for each participating school to build upon within its EE curriculum. Feedback from teachers, students, administrators and parents continue to be exemplary, as evidenced by their continuing to participate over the years.

The Hawk Migration Studies (collaborative efforts with Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, IA) have continued to provide data collection and analysis of critical aspects of the wildlife at the field campus as well as engage students and others in the process of field research. The collaboration of EE experts, naturalists, and educators in the field with the public provides a unique opportunity for all, enhancing EE awareness. Furthermore, it is a natural extension to the Macbride Raptor Project, which has as its goal the education of the public about the importance of raptors to the well-being of natural ecosystems and societal impacts. This program is an outstanding ambassador for one to consider the effects of our technological society and examine potential solutions to minimize the negative effects upon raptors. Again, collaboration is the key and this program is a true model of collaborations (i.e. Raptor Clinic located on Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa).

These programs and its staff are to be commended for their continued excellence and the impact they have. The sphere of influence is wide, affecting youth to adults, both formally and informally. From my vantage point, and all feedback from students,

teachers, and the pre-service teachers that I work with, it is obvious that these programs are worthy of this award. The programs continue to provide, as they have for numerous years, exemplary opportunities/experiences to a very diverse audience.

At a time when budgets are tight and priorities are re-examined, it is not unusual for programs, such as those mentioned, to be cut as they may not be seen by some to be critically aligned to the 'mission' within a university environment. This can certainly be the view by many. As such, there is no better time to recognize these exemplary programs. Endangered as they are, they will not survive without the appropriate financial support. Recognition, of them could playa vital role in their well-being.

In summary, this 'cluster' of collaborative programs has been and continues to be exemplary. They deserve recognition for their contributions both formally and informally, as well as the field research endeavors they stimulate. Speaking for students, teachers, administrators, parents and the university, I recommend this effort (U.I. Wild) for the Ding Darling Award.

Sincerely Yours,
Edward L. Pizzini, Professor of Science Education
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