



Swarovski Foundation Waterschool Teacher Maggie Dust Awarded Grant from Environmental Education Association of Illinois

by Jared Smilack

February 6 2024 1:32 PM



EAST ALTON – Lincoln Middle School teacher Maggie Dust is changing how her students interact and engage with scientific concepts thanks to a recent grant from the Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI).

Dust, a partner of the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRRECsm) and the Swarovski Foundation, plans to use the grant, along with matching funds from the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool program, to purchase an EnviroScape model for her classroom.

"This grant holds immense value for my students and me as it enables us to expand our approach to environmental education," Dust said. "The EnviroScape model, made possible by this grant, will revolutionize how students engage with scientific concepts."

The hands-on, visual EnviroScape model allows students to understand the interconnectedness of human activities and their environment more tangibly. It will enable them to explore the snowball effect of pollution sources and cross-reference previous topics about resources and their impact on the environment.

Dust credits her partnerships with the Swarovski Foundation

and NGRREC for enriching her school community by providing valuable resources, expertise and engaging programs that have enhanced environmental education initiatives.

"The grant not only signifies support for our educational initiatives but also signifies a commitment to providing students with a comprehensive and immersive learning experience that will foster a heightened awareness of environmental issues and the importance of sustainable choices," Dust said.

She emphasized that environmental education is an investment in the future, empowering the next generation to become environmental stewards with the knowledge and values needed to address global challenges.

"Maggie's passion for environmental education, coupled with her collaborative efforts with NGRREC and the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool USA program, has not only earned her this well-deserved grant from the Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI), but it also shows her exceptional commitment to enriching her students' learning experiences," said Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 Superintendent Patrick Shelton. "We look forward to seeing the positive impact her work will have on her students."

Waterschool is a global program by the Swarovski Foundation. It aims to educate and empower students and their communities on the importance of sustainable water use, creating connections with local waterways, and taking action to ensure. It is rooted in the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Quality Education

(Goal 4), Clean Water and Sanitation (Goal 6), and Partnerships for the Goals (Goal 17). NGRREC is the host of the Waterschool USA program.

NGRREC and the Swarovski Foundation are dedicated to helping citizens better understand the planet's water resources and the human impact on them. Their goal is to empower people to make personal choices that ensure access to clean water.

The Waterschool program provides educators with environmental education curriculum materials, educator workshops, and funding for field trips to connect students with their water resources and community service projects focused on improving water quality.

Waterschool USA Coordinator and NGRREC Interim Education Director Jennifer Mandeville says the Swarovski Foundation Waterschool program is built on partnerships.

"It's one of the primary UN SDGs that the program focuses on," said Mandeville. "I am so thankful to partner with Maggie and support her goal of connecting her students with their watershed and demonstrating how people can make choices that lead to a healthy Mississippi River. Working with Maggie's students over the last two years and providing more sustaining support with the EnviroScape model is a perfect example of how the Waterschool program can benefit a community."

Field trips supported by the Waterschool program include canoeing on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, visiting water treatment plants, and water quality monitoring trips. Action projects have included peer-education days, rain barrel installation projects, tree planting projects, and trash clean-ups. The program also offers summer camps known as Camp Waterschool to area youth.

Any teacher interested in becoming part of the Waterschool community can contact NGRREC's education team at ngrreceducation@lc.edu or learn more at http://www.ngrrec.org/Swarovski_Waterschool/.

About National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?)

NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them, facilitating the efficient implementation of science into policy and practice. Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, the center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities.