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CONTACT:

Sharla Feldscher, 215-627-0801 x 101
sharla@fhpublicrelations.com; cell 215-258-4868
Julie Hayes, 484-430-2352
jhayes@mankogold.com

12th ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD WINNERS HONORED at SURPRISE PRESENTATIONS

Region-Wide Search Spearheaded by
Wawa, 6abc and Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP

UPPER MERION AREA MIDDLE SCHOOL, King of Prussia, PA

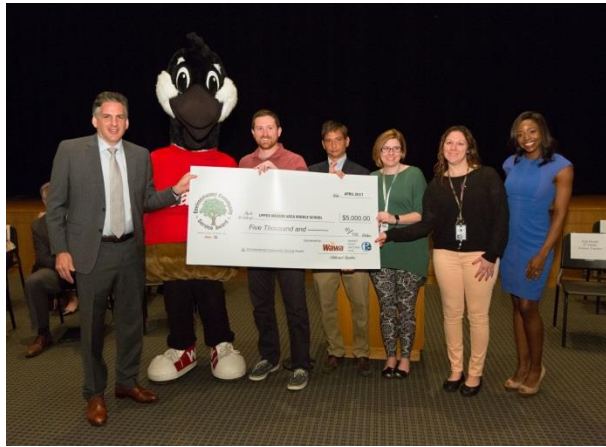


Photo by Mark Garvin

Left to right: Robb Fox, partner Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP; Wally the Wawa Goose; 8th Grade Teacher Jason Quenzer, Thayer Schroeder, Cultural Specialist, Wawa; Teacher Jen Straub, Teacher Heather Berk, and 6abc Meteorologist Melissa Magee.

LAS AMÉRICAS ASPIRA ACADEMY, Newark, DE



Photo by Mark Garvin

Featured with students of Las Américas Aspira Academy and local children include (left to right): Niki Hawkins, Public Affairs Manager, 6abc; Wally the Wawa Goose; Thayer Schroeder, Cultural Specialist, Wawa; Nicole Sturgill, Kindergarten Immersion Teacher and Coordinator of the Outdoor Learning Environment, Aspira Academy; Margie Lopez-Waite, Head of School, Aspira Academy; Kate Campbell, partner Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP; and Serah Pesce, Parent Volunteer and Delaware Nature Society Teacher Naturalist.

Philadelphia, PA (April 24, 2017) – Upper Merion Area Middle School in King of Prussia, PA and Las Américas Aspira Academy in Newark, DE, were honored with the 2017 Environmental Community Service Award, presented by Wawa, 6abc, and the environmental law firm Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP (MGKF). The goal of the Environmental Community Service Award is to recognize two schools (6th to 12th grades) for their outstanding programs that enhance and improve the quality of life in their communities as well as raise awareness of environmental concerns. Each school received a \$5,000 honorarium to advance their environmental programs.

As part of the 8th grade Science curriculum involving Sustainability, Upper Merion Area Middle School partnered with Riverbend Environmental Education Center to immerse 8th grade Science students in a yearlong project learning about Sustainability through Aquaponics. In the first half of the school year, approximately 300 8th grade students were divided into 12 small companies to create and manage a basil lemonade business. The companies were divided into divisions: CEO, Aquaponics Farming, Production, Distribution and Marketing, Finance, and Risk/Waste Management. Students were completely responsible for every aspect of the project including: cleaning/maintaining the aquarium; growing the basil; creating a recipe from scratch; determining the environmental impact of all aspects of the business; creating a marketing plan; using a fixed budget to determine costs/profits based on the recipe and sales; and identifying ways to mitigate possible risks. Halfway through the project, 16 professional experts from each field met with the student divisions to provide feedback for their business.

“In the 12-year history of this award, this is by far one of the most creative projects I’ve seen,” said MGKF’s Robb Fox who was instrumental in founding this award more than a decade ago. “The partnerships with Riverbend, the business community, and among the students as they worked together to create, market, and sell their products offered such amazing life experiences for these students.”

Sean W. Gardiner, Ed.D., Director of Curriculum and Instruction for STEM Education for the Upper Merion School District was thrilled to receive the award along with the faculty, administrators, school board representatives and students. Gardiner said, “I’ve seen how the teachers, students and partners have taken this project from an idea to a whole new level. Everyone is excited and motivated and I know this award will help us expand our programming.”

The Outdoor Learning Environment at Las Américas Aspira Academy started one year ago. There are many aspects of the program that include a natural playground that a group of 8th graders has worked on throughout the school year. The student teams focused on design, budget, finance and publicity in a team effort that led to the installation of this project and native perennial plants around the school campus in March 2017. With their unique school setting of an industrial park, the Aspira Academy campus includes a stormwater retention pond and a good deal of blacktop. Their mission was to create an environment where student learning can extend outside of the classroom and wildlife can thrive.

In addition, there is a Monarch Waystation that was installed last Spring when about 20 of Aspira Academy students had the opportunity to tag and release over 25 monarch butterflies. They are currently working with MonarchWatch.org to track the migration of those butterflies to their overwintering site in Mexico and make a cultural connection as a majority of the school population is Hispanic. There is also a Helping Hands Garden maintained and harvested by 100 Kindergarteners, then donated to the Brandywine Zoo for animal enrichment.

Nicole Sturgill, Kindergarten Immersion Teacher and Coordinator of the Outdoor Learning Environment at Aspira Academy nominated the program for the award and was also instrumental in gathering the students together to come in over their Spring Break to receive their surprise honor. “I’m certainly not in this alone in this project. Jocelyn Cane, our 7th and 8th Grade Social Studies teacher and Middle School Quest teacher has worked with the students involved with the Interactive Natural Playground project on a daily basis since the beginning of the school year. She has overseen the students working in their small teams and together as a whole to plan, research, design and implement their vision. We are also so appreciative of Serah Pesce, a parent volunteer who is also a Teacher Naturalist at the Delaware Nature Society.”

Since the program's inception, more than 20 schools in the tri-state area have been recognized for their outstanding programs. Last year's winners were Villanova's The Academy of Notre Dame de Namur for their "Project Stream" and Winslow Township Middle School in Atco, NJ for their environmental STEM program mirroring community farms. In prior years, the winner schools have been George W. Nebinger School in Philadelphia; The Douglass School in Wilmington, DE; The Pathway School in Norristown, PA; South Philadelphia High School in Philadelphia; Central Bucks High School West in Doylestown, PA; Abington High School in Abington, PA; Williamstown Middle School in Williamstown, NJ, Hatboro-Horsham High School in Horsham, PA, Charles F. Patton Middle School in Kennett Square, PA; Father Judge High School in Philadelphia; Epiphany of Our Lord School in Plymouth Meeting, PA; Abraham Lincoln High School – Horticultural Academy in Philadelphia; Interboro High School in Prospect Park, PA; St. Francis Xavier School in the Fairmount section of Philadelphia; Cedarbrook Middle School in Wyncote; Gateway Regional High School in Woodbury Heights, NJ; W.B. Saul High School of Agricultural Sciences, Philadelphia.; Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander University of Pennsylvania Partnership School in West Phila; Friends Central Middle School in Merion, PA; and Camden High School in Camden, N.J.

The individuals who judge the programs are all experts in the field of the environment and science. They are representatives from The Franklin Institute, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Fairmount Water Works, the Stroud Center, Pennsylvania and New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, and Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control along with someone representing each sponsor -- Wawa, 6abc, and MGKF.

About Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP:

Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP concentrates its practice in environmental, energy, and land use law and litigation. It represents clients ranging from Fortune 100 corporations to small, privately held enterprises, both in the Mid-Atlantic Region and on a national basis. Their commitment to education is manifested in the lawyers' participation in environmental programs outside the office. *MGKF is honored to be the top-rated law firm, since 2011, in the Top Workplaces surveys by the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily News and Philly.com* and has been recognized nationally as one of the top 20 Best Law Firms for Female Partners by Law360.

About Wawa, Inc.:

Wawa, Inc., a privately held company, traces its roots back to 1803 as an iron foundry in New Jersey. Owner George Wood started a dairy processing plant in Wawa, PA, in 1902. The milk business was a success, due to its quality, cleanliness and "certified" process. In 1964, George's grandson Grahame Wood opened the first Wawa Food Market in Folsom, PA. Today the company operates more than 600 stores in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Florida. Wawa is known for its branded products including award-winning coffee and freshly prepared hoagies. Wawa consistently ranks among Forbes' top 100 privately held companies. "Wawa" is the Lenni-Lenape Indian word for flying goose.

About 6abc:

6abc Action News is the #1 local news brand in the tri-state, and the undisputed news leader for the past 35 years. 6abc.com, the official website of Action News, is also the #1 local TV news website in the market. WPVI-TV is the ABC-owned station serving the Delaware and Lehigh Valleys.

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