

2009 Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year Award

Ruth Eisenhower

The winner of the 2009 Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year Award is Ruth Eisenhower of the Harford Glen Environmental Education Center in Bel Air, Maryland. During her 15-year (and counting) tenure, the scope and breadth of outreach and education has grown exponentially while staff levels have remained a constant 4. It is Ruth's amazing motivational and organizational skills that keep the staff sane and the programs running.

Educating every single 5th grader in the county in day and residential programming, along with conducting field studies for middle and high school students, organizing community events, and assisting schools through the Maryland Green School certification process with a staff of 4 and only 24 hours in a day takes planning. With a gypsy-like ability to see into the future, Ruth sets the "big picture" in June, then dissects it into a flawless schedule upon which staff and teachers can rely. However, as the saying goes, "the best laid plans..." With Ruth at the helm, there is no force de majeure get out of class free card at Harford Glen.

In her free time, Ruth became a Certified Master Gardener and then set about to redesign, plant, and maintain the gardens at Harford Glen. With her new green thumb, Ruth partnered with Master Gardeners to promote the "Grow It, Eat It!" program to Harford County schools. Through this program, students produce food that is served at the residential program. Ruth also organized the Checkerspot Butterfly Project which is working to bolster populations of this endangered insect.

Nominator Amanda Koss admitted that it was her experience at Harford Glenn as a fifth grader with Ms. Eisenhower that influenced her to go into the field of environmental education. Now as a peer, Amanda is still learning from Ruth. Everyday she goes into work, Ruth's words ring in her ear, "This is our one shot with these kids. We have 4 short days to change or mold their views about how to take care of the planet. We can't afford to work at below 100%."

