

Dana Pounds Honored as National Wetlands Award Winner

Executive Director of Nature's Academy recognized for prestigious, national award

(Washington, D.C., May 18, 2017) – Dana Pounds, Executive Director and Founder of Nature's Academy, has been awarded the 2017 National Wetlands Award from the Environmental Law Institute. "Dana is being honored as a leader in protecting wetland resources in the face of climate change and development", according to ELI President Scott Fulton.

Per the official National Wetlands Award website, "The National Wetlands Awards are presented annually to individuals who have excelled in wetlands protection, restoration, and education. Through coordinated media outreach, educational events, and an awards ceremony on Capitol Hill, awardees receive national recognition and attention for their outstanding efforts. The program is administered by the Environmental Law Institute and supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, NOAA Fisheries, and the Federal Highway Administration."

"Being named a recipient of the 2017 National Wetlands Award is a humbling experience," says Dana Pounds. "At Nature's Academy, our vision is to be recognized as preeminent outdoor educators who inspire students of all ages to understand and embrace the health and beauty of our natural resources. Every member of our team strives to bring about positive change through our education and outreach programs. I am deeply honored to accept this award on behalf of the entire Nature's Academy organization, our partners, and our fellow wetlands champions around the globe."

Nature's Academy offers STEM-focused, outdoor, educational field trips with an emphasis on enhancing science literacy and fostering environmental stewardship. The Nature's Academy program has developed a suite of experiential learning programs which integrate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), Common Core, and Next Generation Science Standards.

Dana believes that a "remarkable moment occurs when a child connects with nature. Children want to learn. They are eager for responsibility. They flourish when they can be actively involved. A meaningful outdoor experience can transform a child into a lifelong environmental ambassador. This is the heart of the STEM Literacy Project at Nature's Academy."

By offering "Edventures" at no cost to lower-income students, Dana and Nature's Academy have successfully extended these programs to many local minority students from underserved schools in Manatee County, Florida. Now, nearly every fifth grader in the county has access to Nature Academy's outdoor science education. Through her decade of work with Nature's Academy, she has engaged over 55,000 students, teachers, and chaperones from 41 states and five countries to become guardians of wetlands.

In addition to her efforts through Nature's Academy, Dana visibly represents the impact STEM-related concepts can have on community members, as she is a cancer survivor and above-the-knee amputee. Diagnosed with desmoid tumors in 1999, Dana lost her leg, but not her passion nor her drive. In recent years, Dana has completed multiple 5Ks with her prosthetic leg and is continuing her journey and her training to complete a marathon.

When asked about what motivates her daily, Dana says: "Science education isn't my just life's work. Science education literally saved my life. So, I feel compelled to inspire youth to fall in love with science in the hope that someday they may use science to save the lives of other people and the planet itself."

To learn more about Nature's Academy or to donate to their efforts to impact their community and the world through science literacy, visit them online at www.NaturesAcademy.org. To follow Dana on her journey to raise awareness for the [Desmoid Tumor Research Foundation](#), visit her personal website at www.DanaPounds.com.

Please direct questions or comments to media@naturesacademy.org or call 941.462.2162.