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SCHOOLS ACHIEVE FEDERAL GREEN RIBBON STATUS WITH HELP FROM GRADES OF GREEN

Non-profit environmental group credited for helping schools make the grade

Manhattan Beach, Calif. (May 21, 2012)—When the U.S. Department of Education announced the winners in its first annual Green Ribbon Schools program on Earth Day last month, few realized that two winning schools, two thousand miles apart, were connected. Yet Grand View Elementary in Manhattan Beach, and Richardsville Elementary in Bowling Green, Kent., have something important in common: Both give credit for their Green Ribbon awards in part to Grades of Green, a fast-growing non-profit that gives students, parents, and educators free tools to make their schools green.

“If we didn’t have Grades of Green and the fantastic parent volunteers who help us implement their programs, we could not have won the Green Ribbon Award,” said Grand View Elementary’s principal Rhonda Steinberg. “I highly recommend Grades of Green to any school that wants to get greener.”

For its part, Grades of Green credits Grand View with its success. “We were just a handful of parents and kids who wanted to be more environmentally responsible and saw a chance to make a difference at our school,” said Grades of Green co-founder Lisa Coppedge. “Our wonderful principal and our parents jumped on the bandwagon, and it wasn’t long before schools across the country were calling to find out how we did it.”

Coppedge and three other mothers decided to share instructions for their activities online, and launched Grades of Green as a national non-profit on Earth Day 2010. Grand View Elementary became their de facto pilot school. Now, more than 40 Grades of Green activities like “Walk to School Wednesday” and “Trash-Free Lunch Tuesdays” are being implemented in 111 schools worldwide.

Richardsville Elementary in Bowling Green was the 50th school to enroll in Grades of Green. The school’s Curriculum Coordinator Manesha Ford signed up in November of 2010, impressed with the group’s free instructions for implementing environmental activities. “As a brand-new school in the nation’s first “Net Zero” school building, we wanted to do everything perfectly green. We started by reducing our electricity use and our trash production with Grades of Green’s *Electricity Challenge* and *In-class Recycling* activities,” said Ford.

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“Grades of Green has helped give us good ideas to keep getting greener,” continued Ford. “Next year we plan to begin using their *Composting* and *Native Garden* programs.”

The U.S Department of Education selects Green Ribbon Schools based on their accomplishments in reducing environmental impact, promoting health, and preparing students with sustainability concepts needed in the growing global economy.

Based in Manhattan Beach, Grades of Green is an international non-profit organization that provides parents and educators with free tools for making schools greener on its website, www.gradesofgreen.org. Anyone wanting to implement sustainability programs can register their schools online—at no cost—to get tips on reducing trash, emissions, and harmful classroom chemicals, plus dozens of other ways to help the environment.

A recipient of the U.S. EPA’s coveted Environmental Award, Grades of Green has nearly 70,000 students enrolled in the U.S., Canada and Australia. Its goal is to enroll thousands of schools with millions of kids—all caring for the environment and collectively making a huge impact. For more information, visit www.gradesofgreen.org or contact Kim Martin at 310-291-4476.

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