

SAMARA

Introduction

The Samara Awards Program is the end result of a lot of people who care about and want to promote living, loving, and learning about West Virginia. In fact, many of the people who are now helping with the Samara Awards Program began contributing to conservation/environmental education during the 1960's when the classroom resource book "**Living, Loving, Learning West Virginia**" was being written.

The West Virginia Conservation Education Council serves as a forum for promoting conservation/environmental education throughout the state. At the council meeting in the fall of 1983 it was decided that an awards program recognizing students and schools should be developed. During that winter information was received and compiled from resource specialist and concerned organizations. The information was then tested and consolidated during the summer of 1984 and the program was ready by late spring 1985. That program was later updated in 2004.

The Samara Awards Program seeks to educate students on conservation/environmental issues and recognizes those students who excel in the program. The program is dedicated to awarding through identification and recognition. Now that the program identifies achievers in our school systems, interested groups are encouraged to join in the recognition of these fine students. For example, after the top boy and girl in a local school were identified the local garden club awarded them scholarships to the Junior Conservation Camp. To concerned organizations the Samara Awards Program is a valuable tool in which they can become involved.

Even the Samara Awards Program's name came from multiple sources. It is an awards program, rather than a "test" for as a Conservation District supervisor so aptly said, "Our primary goal is to award good work". The "Samara" came from a statement by a forester, who said it should spread the beauty and sweetness of understanding. To which a botanist stated, "this is analogy to the role of the samara, for the samara is the winged seed of our state tree and it spread these beautiful trees with their sweet sap."

Many individuals are promoting the Samara Awards Program throughout the state but the keystone group is the Conservation Districts and their numerous contacts. The districts have a wonderful record of success and we can rest assured they will make the most of this program for young people in West Virginia.