

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jeanine Silversmith, 401-569-8758

**WEST KINGSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO
RE-DEDICATE ANN PERKINS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM**

West Kingston – April, 2012 – Current West Kingston students, teachers, families, and people of all ages will come together to participate in the Ann Perkins Outdoor Classroom Re-dedication Ceremony at West Kingston Elementary School (WKES) in West Kingston on April 25, 2012.

The Ann Perkins Outdoor Classroom was established almost 20 years ago out of an unused forested patch on the school property. This was in 1993 and was made possible with the assistance of the entire 1993 WKES community. Parents and 8-year-old students cleared trails; classes sold soda cans to purchase the benches; and community members built the large teaching boards. The project was spearheaded by third grade teacher Ann Perkins, leading to the space being named after her. Now, the WKES community gets to gather once more with a new generation of outdoor enthusiasts. The students who created this space are now grown and are in their late twenties, many with children of their own.

Recently, Douglas Arnold, a high school student at South Kingstown High School, saw the eroded condition and knew that he could make a difference in his community. He set forth and gathered a team to refurbish the benches and large teaching board as well as clear the nature trail that runs around it. Because of his work, Douglas will be granted an Eagle Scout award, the highest rank attainable in the Boy Scouting program of the Boy Scouts of America.

The Re-dedication Ceremony will take place on Wednesday, April 25, at 1:45pm, at West Kingston Elementary School, 3119 Ministerial Road, West Kingston, RI 02892. Members of the media are invited to attend.

The ceremony will incorporate the entire WKES student body and staff. It is also open to alumni of West Kingston and interested members of the community. As part of the celebration, Ann Perkins, now retired but still a West Kingston resident, will address the audience. Douglas Arnold will speak about his project. The student-body will then join together to perform a nature related song. After a ceremonial ribbon cutting, each class will hike along the nature trail and visit the outdoor classroom, which will be decorated with art work that they themselves have produced.

Kimberly Mather, Principal of WKES said, “It’s such a rare opportunity for students to be able to attend a school that has such a unique setting. Our school building is so accessible to a beautifully natural habitat. Our world is increasingly technological and increasingly cluttered with ‘noise.’ It’s such a gift to have a place for children where they can have a ‘diet’ of nature

during their formative years. I personally believe that the outdoors has never been as important to kids as it is now. I believe that when students are able to go *outside* to an *outdoor classroom* and learn – whether it be a writing skill or a math skill, in the winter or the spring – that truly progressive education is occurring.”

The event is registered as part of the Children & Nature Network’s (C&NN) second annual Let’s G.O.! (Get Outside) campaign during the month of April. Let’s G.O.! is a national, youth-inspired campaign to help create healthy people and healthy communities. The goal of Let’s G.O.! is to bring together intergenerational groups of people to get outside together to be active, have fun and connect with nature. Families, teachers, students, mentors, grandparents and grand friends – and especially children and youth – are invited and encouraged to participate. Last year, over 100,000 people in 44 states participated in Let’s G.O.!

To learn more about the event, contact Jeanine Silversmith at 401-569-8758 or at jeaninesilversmith@gmail.com.

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