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Delaware Nature Society Group Receives Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Award

A group of seven volunteers from the Delaware Nature Society received the Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Award, one of nine groups and 12 individual so honored in 2011. The award winners were recognized at a ceremony in Dover on Nov. 3.

The seven volunteers constructed two Native American style longhouses at Delaware Nature Society's Ashland Nature Center in Hockessin. The longhouses are used in educational programming for school groups, Scout and community groups and public programs.

The volunteer team consisted of Gordon Fisher, Don Ainsworth, Kathy Szczerba, Eric Roberson, Tim Lantz, Jim Bayard and Hank Seiler.

"Volunteers are the backbone of Delaware Nature Society," says Mike Riska, executive director of the Delaware Nature Society. "Without them, we couldn't do all that we do in the areas of education, preservation, stewardship and advocacy. Our longhouse volunteer team gave selflessly of themselves; collectively they devoted more than 1,100 volunteer hours to their task."

The volunteers strove for historical accuracy in the construction of the longhouses. They collected, cut and bundled phragmites – the building material utilized by Native Americans in this region – and learned to lash the pieces together, bending the trusses to just-the-right angle.

"These longhouses are a tremendous addition to our outdoor classroom here at Ashland," says Helen Fischel, associate director of education for the Delaware Nature Society. "Previously, we only had one longhouse; now with these two in operation we can serve much larger school groups. Our Native American programming supports social studies curriculum in Delaware and the surrounding states and is always popular."

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“All of the volunteers in this group care very deeply about the educational programs that DNS presents to the public,” says Christy Belardo, volunteer coordinator for the Delaware Nature Society. “The children who experience these longhouses will enjoy a whole new level of interactive learning and authenticity thanks to the hard work of this group.”

There are a wide range of volunteer opportunities available at the Delaware Nature Society. To learn more, call Belardo at 302-239-2334, ext. 111.

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