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WEF Honors the Public Education Work of Water Professionals, Organizations

ALEXANDRIA, Va., Sept. 7, 2017 - The Water Environment Federation (WEF) proudly announces the 2017 WEF Awards recipients for public education.

The WEF Public Education Awards recognize WEF members for significant accomplishments in promoting awareness and understanding of water environment issues through the development and implementation of public education programs.

“The Water Environment Federation is extremely proud to honor the incredible contributions of these individuals and organizations in protecting one of the world’s most valuable resources and contributing to their communities,” said Eileen O’Neill, WEF Executive Director.

The 2017 recipients for Public Education are:

WEF Canham Graduate Studies Scholarship: Sneha Shanbhag, Carnegie Mellon University

This scholarship, honoring the former WEF Executive Director, Robert Canham, provides \$25,000 for a post-baccalaureate student in the water environment field. Sneha Shanbhag’s Ph.D. research topic is “energy-efficient and ion-selective desalination of brackish water using electrochemical deionization technologies.” At the conclusion of her graduate studies, she plans to pursue teaching and research in a university setting with her research interest being the development of low-cost, energy efficient and practical solutions to address water quality and availability problems.

Fair Distinguished Engineering Educator Medal: Dr. Spyros Pavlostathis, Georgia Institute of Technology

The Fair Medal recognizes accomplishments in the education and development of future engineers. This award honors Gordon Maskew Fair, a professor of sanitary engineering at Harvard University. Throughout his academic career, Dr. Pavlostathis has been a dedicated educator of future environmental engineers, teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Committed to the mission of teaching, he remains actively engaged in the development of curriculum and is involved in the advisement of both graduate and undergraduate engineering students.

Media and Public Education Medal: Elizabeth Brackett

This Award recognizes accomplishments of the media, journalists and others whose profession is outside of the water environment profession field. This medal is in memory of Harry E. Schlenz, who served as WEF President in 1961-1962 and was a distinguished leader in promoting public understanding of the need for effective water quality. For Elizabeth Brackett, it has been a lifetime of work that sets her apart as a committed, persistent and thoughtful journalist driven to promote public education on the water environment. Throughout her illustrious career, she has chronicled the cycle of water to better help the public understand the true value of water, the importance of water infrastructure and solutions to a sustainable water future. She has explored multi-disciplinary issues pertaining to critical and timely issues impacting the Great Lakes and Chicago Area Waterways.

Public Communication and Outreach Program Awards | Individual Category: Robert Bates

Robert Bates has had a lifelong commitment bringing attention to the water sector. This includes a long history of presenting water environment concepts and science to a broad range of audiences. Robert has been a supporter of local and regional science fairs. He has provided hands on learning experiences at Kentucky's largest Water Quality Treatment Facility, the Morris Forman Water Quality Treatment Center. Robert has been a very active and involved volunteer in the WEF biosolids programs. He has been involved with outreach to Costa Rica regarding health and sanitation issues.

Public Communication and Outreach Program Awards| Member Association Category: Water Environment Association of Texas

The Water Environment Association of Texas is forward-looking, multifaceted, and comprehensive, with multiple promotional and participatory events and projects. Some of these programs include fostering the River Cleanup Award Program, filming their environmental service project with students from the surrounding school districts, facilitating the Value of Water – Texas at the Texas Water Conference. In addition, they have worked at finding young water professionals through regional science fairs and support of the Stockholm Jr. Water Prize. Their effort enlists public groups in practical, hands-on environmental work.

Public Communication and Outreach Program Awards | Other Category: Water Replenishment District of Southern California

The Water Replenishment District of Southern California's education program features interactive student activities that focus on the importance of groundwater, the process of water treatment, and the need for conservation. WRD collaborates with teachers, providing no-cost, hands-on teacher training through the Project WET Foundation. The Education Program extends beyond the classroom to reach a wider audience through project-specific and general concept brochures, tri-annual newsletters, educational social media posts, presentations at diverse conferences, and online educational videos.

The awards will be presented during WEFTEC® 2017, the Federation's 90th Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, September 30 to October 4 in Chicago.

For more information about the WEF Awards, visit <https://www.wef.org/awards>

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About WEF

The Water Environment Federation is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 34,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world. Since 1928, WEF and its members have protected public health and the environment. As a global water sector leader, our mission is to connect water professionals, enrich the expertise of water professionals, increase the awareness of the impact and value of water, and provide a platform for water sector innovation. To learn more, visit <http://www.wef.org/>.