

# Florida Project Learning Tree Annual Report 2006

## Partnership in Youth Education

Schools • Industry • Nonprofits • 4H • Government • Universities



Photo credits l-r: Jenny Seitz, Summer Zephyr, Michelle Hunter, Lucy Cortese

*PLT uses the forest as a "window on the world" to increase students' understanding of our complex environment, to stimulate critical and creative thinking, to develop the ability to make informed decisions on environmental issues, and to instill the confidence and commitment to take responsible action on behalf of the environment.*



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 **Florida Division of Forestry**

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 **UF/IFAS 4-H Youth Program**

## Greetings from PLT Central

I am proud to say we have had another impressive year with 53 workshops training over 1,122 educators and resource professionals to use PLT with youth. Facilitators also interacted with an additional 15,127 youth and adults at events like AgVentures, school field trips, and Earth Day Celebrations. It is my privilege to convey a big "thanks" to our volunteers and sponsors who make these programs possible.

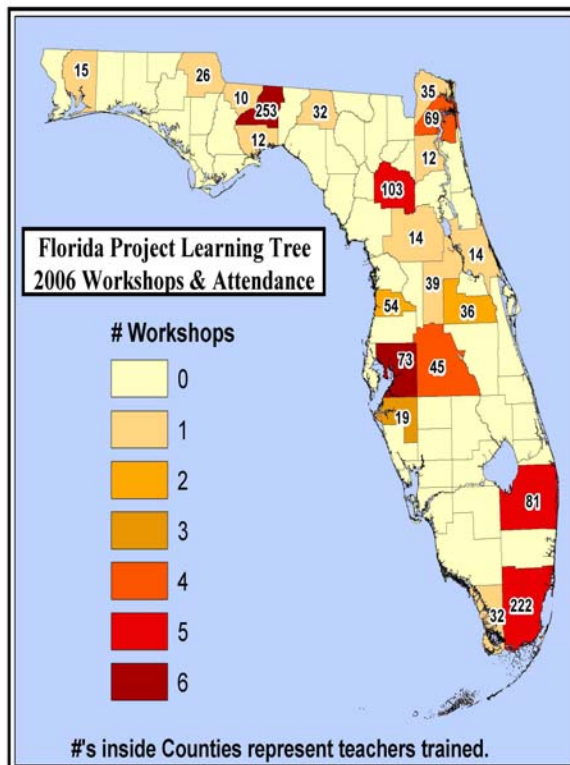
Our new program initiatives are helping us to further meet the needs of educators. We started a pilot study to look at the connection between reading and PLT activities (see page 6). A new partnership with Florida Power and Light allowed us to bring Energy and Society workshops to educators in Manatee County and more are planned for 2007 in Brevard, Miami-Dade, and Nassau Counties. We expanded our PLT Environmental Education Center Program with the addition of Florida Caverns State Park (see page 5). Florida youth learned about wiregrass restoration, native plants, and the value of trees at our PLT Schools (see page 4).

Our future projects include evaluating our program, designing web-based training modules, creating more FCAT-like math, reading, science, and writing prompts to accompany our activities, helping to build an outdoor classroom at PLT School Lake Butler Elementary (Union County) with support from Plum Creek Timber, and expanding our program into the Panhandle and South Florida with support from the Florida Sustainable Forestry Initiative State Implementation Committee, Florida Forestry Association, Florida Power and Light, International Paper, and Rayonier.

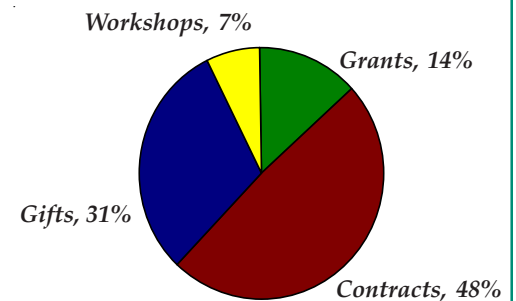
A note at the bottom of one of the evaluations from our Facilitator's ReTREEt (see page 3) caught my attention. It read "I'm leaving so energized and inspired. This is the most meaningful and best organized workshop I've been to." Similar comments come from teachers who attend our educator workshops. It is wonderful to know that PLT is providing a set of high quality products and meeting a need across Florida.

Thank you for your continued support of PLT!

*Jenny Seitz*  
Florida PLT Coordinator



## 2006 Income Sources



### Total Income

Florida PLT depends on support from private and public funding sources.

## Celebrating Excellence

Project Learning Tree applauds all educators, facilitators, and partners whose efforts make our Florida PLT program successful. Bob Cook, FFA President, and Jack Vogel, FFA President-Elect, presented our annual awards at the Florida Forestry Association annual meeting. The 2006 award winners are:

### Educator of the Year: Summer Zephyr

Summer works at A.D. Harris High School in Panama City. Throughout the year, she conducts student field trips to the woods to give the students a chance to explore the natural world. She incorporates the on-site garden and greenhouse into class science projects to encourage the students to see, touch, and think about the world around them. For her dedication to environmental education, Summer is Florida Project Learning Tree's 2006 Educator of the Year.



*l-r Bob Cook, Summer Zephyr, and Jack Vogel.*

### Facilitator of the Year: Karen Johnson-Folsom

Karen actively leads PLT Educator Workshops for the Nature's Classroom staff, as well as home school and public school educators. Her excitement for bringing outdoor learning into the classroom leads her to conduct a variety of workshops from the introductory workshop to wildland fire and energy. Karen's enthusiasm has encouraged four additional educators to join the ranks of facilitators. We thank Karen for her commitment and congratulate this Project Learning Tree Facilitator of the Year.



*l-r Bob Cook, Karen Johnson-Folsom, and Jack Vogel.*

### Business Partner of the Year: Packaging Corporation of America

A consistent financial supporter at the state level, Packaging Corporation also contributes to Florida Project Learning Tree at the community level by hosting workshops for teachers. PCA encourages its employees to assist in PLT as active facilitators and leaders on the Steering Committee. Employees have recruited elementary schools to become Florida PLT Schools and incorporate PLT activities into classroom lessons. We honor Packaging Corporation America's commitment to supporting Project Learning Tree.



Congratulations to all!

*Photos courtesy of Florida Forestry Association.*

## PLT Facilitator Leadership ReTREEt

Our biannual facilitator leadership "retreat" in November brought together 48 facilitators from all over the state. This year's theme, "Changing Times," focused on the PLT program and professional development changes in Florida. Facilitators spent two-and-a half days at the Florida Division of Forestry's Florida Center for Wildfire and Forest Resources Management Training in the Withlacoochee State Forest making new acquaintances, learning new ways to integrate PLT into the classroom, and creating plans for future events. Kicking off with a keynote address about Florida and Climate Change, Dr. Wendell Cropper (SFRC/UF), led a lively discussion about the effects of climate change on the earth. VieVie Baird (Florida Department of Education) explained the importance of the Sunshine State Standards and suggested ways to connect them to workshops. Learning to use Global Positioning System (GPS) units combined with a lesson in map reading gave participants the tools to search the grounds for educational treasures! While fun was had by all,



*l-r Gayle Hoffman and Libby Ormes discuss map reading with their teammates.*

David Moody (USFWS) demonstrated how to incorporate technology into a teacher workshop. Facilitators received ideas on promoting workshops with Heather Callahan (USFS), tools for working with early childhood children with Dr. Babcock and graduate students (Florida Southern College), tips for identifying trees with Shaun Stewart (DOF), strategies for conducting Energy & Society workshops by Cheryl George and Amy Taylor (PCA), and suggestions for connecting urban forests to the classroom with Martha Monroe (SFRC/UF). In addition, fellow facilitators Marcia Bisnett and Kelliann Whitney led sessions on The Global Climate PLT activity and Incorporating Location into Your Agenda, respectively. Enthusiasm for conducting PLT workshops is higher than ever!

## Students in Action at PLT Schools



Brittany Stutz participates in the stream erosion lab with PLT Activity *Water Wonders*.

### St. Michael Lutheran School

For six years, St. Michael Lutheran faculty have incorporated an array of PLT activities into their classrooms. With leadership by the PLT School Coordinator, Katie Schlotterbeck, 23 teachers have attended a PLT professional development workshop and have been trained on how to enhance their lessons by integrating PLT activities. Creative adaptations by faculty have included veggie snacks while discussing plant parts and connecting the story of Johnny Appleseed with early settlers' use of trees when leading lessons about the value of trees.

### Shadeville Elementary School

Friends of the Forests, Take Flight, and H<sub>2</sub>O--Watch it Flow are a few of the week long themes chosen to highlight PLT activities and community resources at Shadeville Elementary School. Since 2000, this school has excelled at bringing community resources to students and taking students out of the classroom. Under the current direction of PLT School Coordinators, Michelle Hunter and Julia Parker, teachers receive the monthly *Leaflet* filled with ideas to integrate PLT into their curriculum at all grade levels. A variety of field trips are scheduled including the fourth grade trip to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge to assist with the wiregrass restoration effort.



Michelle Hunter with her students placing an insect found during PLT Activity *Fallen Log* in a viewing box.

### A.D. Harris High School

As our oldest PLT School, A.D. Harris leads by example. Leon Mays, PLT School Coordinator, arranges for students to spend time in "The Woods," the school's nearby outdoor classroom, learning mapping and tree measurement skills. The newest project is the on-site Victory Garden. This project, coordinated by teacher Summer Zephyr, gave students the skills necessary to research plant species, develop plans for the layout of the garden, test and prepare the soil for the garden, lay stones for the walkway, and plant plants. The project objective is to demonstrate different ways to increase native plants into the landscape environment. A variety of organizations and businesses are helping support this endeavor including Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation, the Bay Environmental Study Team, and the local Exceptional Student Education Council.



Students laying stones around Victory Garden.

# PLT Schools and Environmental Education Centers

Project Learning Tree is more than a collection of activities that can be used with students as classroom filler. It is a means to engage students in critical thinking and hands-on explorations of our natural world. The Florida PLT School and Environmental Education Center programs provide opportunities for PLT to reach an entire community.



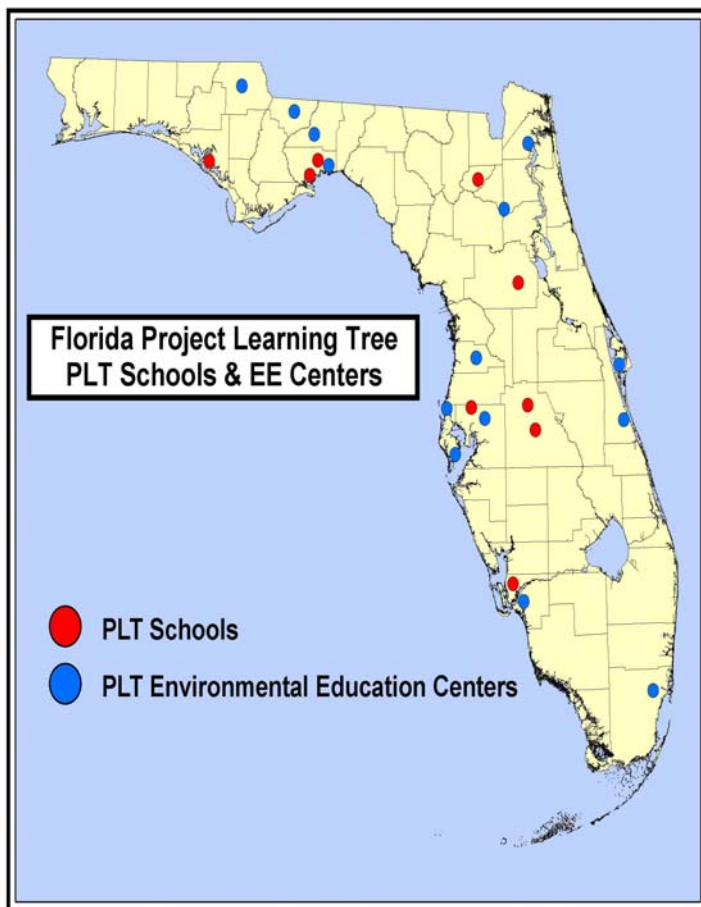
The Florida Project Learning Tree School is a special designation to signify that at least fifty percent of teachers have participated in a PLT workshop from an elementary school or from a subject or grade level in a middle or high school, the school has chosen either one week each year as "PLT Week" or the teachers incorporate at least six activities from PLT in their lesson plans throughout the year, and the school has selected a "PLT Coordinator" from the faculty.

Approved PLT schools receive a colorful PLT School flag, an engraved plaque, a Tree Trunk of teaching aids, and an opportunity to participate in the biannual PLT School's Conference.

The PLT Environmental Education Center signifies that approved PLT Centers have at least one staff member or volunteer who has attended a PLT Facilitator Training Workshop and commit to host at least one PLT educator workshop a year. Centers demonstrate their commitment to education through existing educational programs and provide another link between teachers and important community environmental education resources. Centers use their designation to attract more teachers to their programs and bring local ecosystem information into the classroom.



Florida PLT is proud to have the nine PLT Schools and fourteen Environmental Education Centers as part of our partners in education.



## Support a PLT School

Like what you see of PLT? Want to help? Below are ways that you can help Teach About Trees!

- ☘ Serve as a resource person for a PLT School in your area
- ☘ Provide in-kind support for a PLT School (make tree "cookies," donate a box of paper, etc.)
- ☘ Sponsor a PLT School in your region
- ☘ Sponsor a PLT teacher to attend the Florida PLT Schools' Conference

For additional ideas or to learn more, contact Jenny Seitz at 352.846.2329 or [jacohen@ufl.edu](mailto:jacohen@ufl.edu).

## PLT Connects Science and Reading in the Classroom

The state of Florida places a strong emphasis on reading at all grade levels, especially in elementary schools. Many PLT activities integrate reading and science making it a great addition to the classroom for teachers who have time to create reading activities. This year Florida PLT undertook a study with eight third and fourth grade classes at four of our PLT Schools. We hypothesize that students participating in a hands-on PLT activity will be more interested in the activity topic. This interest will increase student motivation for science and learning. When paired with a relevant story, this increased motivation will improve reading skills and comprehension.

We selected four PLT activities and found popular reading books at grade level. For each book we wrote a number of reading exercises and writing prompts similar to those teachers use with their classroom reader. Some classes did a PLT Activity prior to reading the book and the others went straight to reading the book. Student responses are being analyzed. Teacher reflection surveys include positive comments about these exercises. "I'm excited about using trade books for Reading instead of basal reading text," wrote a fourth grade teacher. Combining science with reading encourages teachers to use these PLT activities more often. "I'm excited about learning more science with hands-on activities and through reading and writing," exclaimed a third grade teacher.



With support from International Paper and Rayonier we will revise the lessons, post them on our web site, and offer reading and PLT-focused workshops.

*The Steering Committee extends their most sincere thanks to the following organizations who generously support educating our youth about the environment.*

### up to \$1000

Florida Dept of Env Protection  
Ring Power Corp.

### \$1001- \$5K

American Petroleum Institute  
Florida Power and Light  
International Paper Company  
Packaging Corporation of America  
Rayonier Inc.  
USDA Bureau of Land Management

### \$5,001 and above

American Forest Foundation  
Florida Division of Forestry  
UF/IFAS School of Forest Res. and Con.

### In-Kind Support

Atlas Screen Printing  
Florida Dept of Education  
Florida Dept of Env Protection  
Florida Division of Forestry  
Florida Forestry Association

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Georgia-Pacific Corp.  
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Plum Creek Timber Company  
Rayonier Inc.  
UF/IFAS School of Forest Res. and Con.  
Smurfit-Stone Container Corp.  
St. Joe Company  
St. Johns River Water Mgmt District  
UF/IFAS 4-H Youth Program  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
USDA Forest Service

*A special thank you to the following facilitators who have volunteered to engage youth and adults in PLT.*

Christine Allen, Dale Armstrong, Florie Babcock, Mary Bahr, Marcia Bisnett, Marcus Boston, Heather Callahan, Mark Case, Lucy Cortese, Sherre Dabinian, Jenny Dambek, Carolyn Durbin, Simone Fidy, David Fogler, Griselda Forbes, Cheryl George, John Haggard, Karen Hales, Glen Harris, Linda Hartmann, Mayfair Head, Mark Hebb, Peggy Hill, Nicole Homberg, Joan Hourican, Michelle Hunter, Craig Iversen, Rodney Ivey, Karen Johnson-Folsom, Becky Jordi, Bill Kleinhans, Debbie Lawrence, Ed Lewis, Lora Lindsey, Jen Loyd-Pain, Joe MacKenzie, Meghan McAdams, Jan McCurdy Schultz, Cindy Maytrott, Cari Meigs, Mark Miller, Brooke Mohr, Martha Monroe, David Moody, Libby Ormes, Jody Owens, Julia Parker, Bob Poorman, Tara Powers, Stan Rosenthal, Royanne Reusch, Katie Schlotterbeck, Lavon Silvernell, Philip Smith, Deb Sparbeck, Shaun Stewart, Allan Stollberg, Martha Stollberg, Tim Stuhr, Audrey Swindal, Amy Taylor, Donna Thomas, Sonya Thompson, Eileen Tramontanna, Bruce Turnbill, Chris Verlinde, Michelle Waterman, Brenda Weeks, Karen Weigelt, Kelley Weitzel, Fred Wiechmann, Robin Will, Kelliann Whitney.