

# FLORIDA PROJECT LEARNING TREE ANNUAL REPORT 2004

## PARTNERSHIP IN YOUTH EDUCATION

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



Photo credits l-r: Jenny Seitz, Joe MacKenzie, Jenny Seitz, Janice Easton

*Using 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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## Partners



School of Forest Resources and Conservation  
University of Florida



Florida Division of Forestry



Florida Forestry Association



UF/IFAS 4-H Youth Program

## GREETINGS FROM PLT CENTRAL

Florida PLT is proud to report that 2004 was another successful year. Over 800 educators were trained in 31 workshops to use PLT materials with youth. They are joining thousands of other educators who use PLT activities in classrooms, at camps, on field trips, and at club meetings. We also contacted an additional 3,430 youth and adults at events like AgVentures, the 4-H forest ecology contest, and Earth Day celebrations. It is a privilege to convey a big "thanks" to our wonderful volunteers and our sponsors who make these programs possible.

The transition to the School of Forest Resources and Conservation at the University of Florida was completed in 2004, and we are pleased to report that a new agreement with the Florida Division of Forestry and Florida Forestry Association has allowed UF/IFAS to establish a half-time staff position at the School of Forest Resources and Conservation. We plan to fill this position in the summer of 2005.

We launched two major initiatives that reached important milestones in 2004. The urban forest supplement to PLT was completed and early copies were distributed to selected educators and facilitators. This important component of Florida's PLT program was made possible by funding from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry grant funds received through the Florida Division of Forestry and matching funds from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at UF (see page 3). We look forward to adding a hurricane component to this material and conducting workshops in south Florida with support from International Paper in 2005.

The second initiative was to upgrade our facilitator training program. A series of one-day workshops around the state culminated in a 3-day state-wide training at the Withlacoochee Training Center in Brooksville (see page 4). Forty-five returning and aspiring facilitators were introduced to our new programs and recharged with ideas for addressing Florida's education reform practices with PLT activities.

Our newly revised Web site (<http://sfrc.ufl.edu>) is helping us keep in touch with our facilitators and maintain the on-going efforts to strengthen their skills to work within the Florida education system. New professional development protocols for teachers have reinforced that what PLT has to offer is appropriate and well-suited to Florida schools.

The PLT Schools program is strong, and the new PLT Environmental Education Center program is attracting nonformal programs in nature centers, museums, and agency sites across the state. A variety of programs are in place and new ones are on the horizon. The PLT Steering Committee is developing a 5-year plan with input from facilitators and educators to help us prioritize the multitude of opportunities we have for enhancing forest education in Florida.

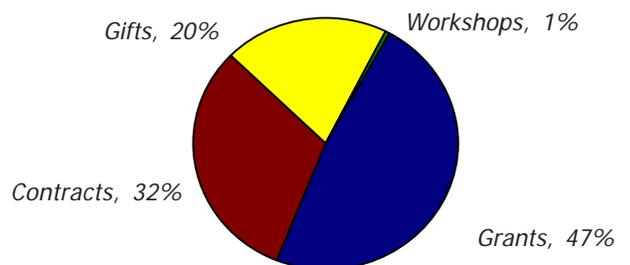
Thank you for your continued support of PLT!

**Jenny Seitz**  
Florida PLT Coordinator  
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## 2004 INCOME SOURCES

### Total Income

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



## HIGHLIGHTING EDUCATORS IN ACTION

PLT applauds all educators, facilitators, and partners whose efforts make our Florida PLT program successful. Each year we recognize two individuals and one organization at the Florida Forestry Association annual meeting. The 2004 award winners are:

### **Educator of the Year: Dr. Florie Babcock**

Dr. Babcock is a professor of early childhood education at Florida Southern College. Each semester her students attend a PLT workshop, select a PLT activity, adapt it for youth in grades 1-3, and lead the activities at Lakeland Christian School. Florie is instrumental in bringing early childhood education resources to the PLT School's Conference and Advanced Facilitator ReTREEE. We are pleased to bestow PLT's Educator of the Year award upon Florie.



### **Facilitator of the Year: Mark Miller**

Mark is the recreation manager for the City of Apopka. His love for the environment comes through his innovative educator workshops. In addition to leading workshops, Mark leads activities at the PLT School's Conferences and Facilitator ReTreeets. He assists PLT's joint efforts with Projects WET and WILD to bring hands-on activities to educators at WET, WILD and Woodsy teacher workshops. We thank Mark for his commitment to keeping Florida's PLT alive and well.



### **Business Partner of the Year: Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation**

A consistent financial supporter at the state level, Smurfit-Stone also contributes to Project Learning Tree at

the community level by hosting workshops and providing educational materials for teachers. Smurfit-Stone encourages its employees to get involved in PLT as active facilitators and leaders on the Steering Committee. We honor Smurfit-Stone's commitment to supporting Project Learning Tree.

The logo for Smurfit-Stone, featuring the company name in a stylized, serif font.

### **Outstanding Educator of the Year: Fred Wiechmann**

This year we are particularly pleased to announce that Florida's Fred Wiechmann was selected by National PLT to receive the national educator award. Fred is principal and PLT School Coordinator of Lakeland Christian School. For the past 11 years, Fred has been an advocate for PLT. The beginning of each school year kicks off with Creation Care Week, where PLT activities are conducted daily at all grade levels. Fred jumps at any opportunity to advocate for PLT. He has facilitated PLT workshops at many venues including Florida Southern College, PLT School's Conference, and the Annual Association of Christian Schools International Florida Teacher's Convention.



This award marks the fourth time that a Florida PLT Educator has been recognized at the national level. As part of his award, Fred participated in the International PLT Coordinator's Conference in North Dakota and in the World Forestry Center's Summer International Educators Institute in Oregon.

Congratulations to all!

## URBAN FOREST SUPPLEMENT

Most youth in Florida live in urban areas where the closest forest is an urban forest. While some of the PLT activities are well suited to being used in urban areas, few of them convey the many benefits of urban forests to city residents or strategies for protecting and maintaining the urban forest. Florida PLT created *Urban Forests: A supplement to Florida's Project Learning Tree*, to support the core activity guide so an urban educator has the tools to help students understand Florida's urban forest.

Created with USDA Forest Urban and Community Forestry grant funds received through the Florida Division of Forestry and resources from the College of Agriculture and Life Science at UF, the supplement identifies 28 activities that already work well in urban areas; 19 PLT activities that can be adapted with suggestions to be more applicable to an urban space; 6 urban forest extensions to existing PLT activities; and 6 new activities. The Supplement is based on three themes: urban forest ecology, benefits of an urban forest, and strategies for improving urban forest health.

Efforts are underway to create an urban forest page on the Florida PLT website with urban forest resources, state contacts, and the supplement. For the current status of this site please visit <http://sfc.ufl.edu/plt> or contact Jenny Seitz at 352.846.2329.



## FACILITATOR TRAINING

Facilitators are what make the PLT program a success. As volunteers they conduct workshops across the state for educators. This year, 45 aspiring and veteran facilitators participated in one of three one-day trainings at Tree Hill Nature Center (Jacksonville), St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (St. Marks), and Pine Jog Environmental Education Center (West Palm Beach). Participants learned the A to Z of organizing, conducting, and wrapping up workshops. The culminating event took place in October at Withlacoochee State Forest (Brooksville). The two-and-a-half day Advanced Facilitator ReTREEt covered topics such as: urban forestry, fire education, exploring forest ecosystems, and navigating new teacher professional development requirements. Participants received facilitator boxes full of resources and tools to do PLT activities at their workshops. All four workshops provided opportunities to network with educators and natural



resource professionals. Since the training sessions, our new facilitators have teamed together to conduct four workshops with more planned for 2005.

## THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

Clay County School Board  
Florida Ag in the Classroom  
Florida Department of Education  
Florida Division of Forestry  
Florida Forestry Association  
Georgia-Pacific Corporation  
International Paper Company  
Packaging Corporation of America  
Plum Creek Timber Company  
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UF/IFAS Forest Res. and Conservation  
Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation  
St. Joe Company  
St. Johns River Water Mgmt District  
UF/IFAS 4-H Youth Program  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
USDA Forest Service



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

## PLT IN THE SCHOOLS

Florida PLT School is a special award and designation to signify that at least fifty percent of the school's teachers have participated in a PLT workshop, 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.

Florida is proud to have the following twelve PLT Schools: A.D. Harris High (Panama City), Buck Lake Elementary (Tallahassee), Columbia City Elementary (Lake City), Fort McCoy Elementary (Ft. McCoy), Lake Butler Elementary School (Lake Butler), Lakeland Christian (Lakeland), Learning Gate Community (Lutz), Northside Christian School (St. Petersburg), Riverside Elementary (Marianna), St. Michael Lutheran (Ft. Myers), St. Paul Lutheran (Lakeland), and Shadeville Elementary (Crawfordville).



For information on becoming a PLT School or a sponsor of a PLT School, please contact Jenny Seitz by phone at 352.846.2329 or by email at [jacohen@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:jacohen@ifas.ufl.edu).