

## **PLT Marks 30 Years in Ohio**

*Over 20,000 Ohio educators with environmental education training*

(By Greg Smith, ODNR Division of Forestry)

For an Ohio buckeye seed, thirty years of growth produces a young tree, with well-established roots and an actively growing crown. Likewise, the Ohio branch of the award-winning environmental education program Project Learning Tree (PLT) has grown over thirty years. And like an Ohio buckeye tree, its environmental benefits are far reaching.

“PLT equips educators of all levels using the framework of trees and forests to teach a wide range of subjects,” said Sue Wintering, PLT Coordinator, ODNR Division of Forestry. “Children in Ohio are more aware of their natural world, and the many environmental and economic benefits of healthy forests, thanks to PLT.”

International in scope, Project Learning Tree was developed and is continuously improved by educators, foresters, and other environmental professionals. Recent additions to the traditional kindergarten through high school lessons include an early childhood learning strategy and the Forests of the World high school module. Ohio educators were instrumental in the development and initial use of both programs launched this year.

Over the past thirty years, over 20,000 Ohio educators, natural resource professionals, and other leaders of learners have attended one-day PLT sessions or multiple day facilitator leadership workshops. PLT activity lessons have recently been correlated to state teaching standards for science and social studies.

“PLT gives young people of all ages a whole new way to understand their world,” said Michael Stewart, ten-year environmental educator with the Miami County Park District and retired 30 year teacher with Springfield Schools, recognized as the PLT Ohio’s 2010 Outstanding Educator. “The students thrive on PLT because it is hands-on, interesting, and gets them thinking at a higher level.”

Among those given special recognition for their support of PLT and outdoor education at the annual banquet and training held recently at the Columbus Zoo was Janet Sweigart, Chair of the Ohio Tree Farm Committee.

PLT is used by 15 Ohio colleges and universities as part of their teaching methods classes or in special workshop courses. An on-line graduate-level leadership workshop for facilitators is offered through the Miami University iDiscovery program.

*For workshop, as well as PLT program information and state correlations, visit <http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/tabid/5119/Default.aspx>.*