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Grand Valley Helps Teachers Grow Earth's Future Stewards

by Clay Pelon

Dr. Janet Vail is helping educators and students protect the Great Lakes and she would love to see you.

Working for the Annis Water Resources Institute (AWRI) at Grand Valley State University, Dr. Vail is in charge of the extensive education and outreach activities of AWRI. Over 100,000 students, educators, and community members have participated in their "hands-on science programs" since 1986.

According to Dr. Vail, "AWRI offers a wide array of programs for K-12 students, teachers, and the general public. On a busy day, we may have a senior citizen group tour the Lake Michigan Center and 100 students on the vessels."

One of the best utilized programs at AWRI is the two Grand Valley research vessels the *D.J. Angus* and *W.G. Jackson*. Attendees of this program participate in research activities on Lake Michigan, Muskegon or Spring Lake. From analyzing specimens from the lakebed to accessing water clarity, participants are offered the chance to conduct experiments while sailing on the lake.

"Both vessels are a vibrant part of their communities—the *Angus* in Grand Haven and the *Jackson* in Muskegon. GVSU instructors and school systems have written the vessel experience into their curricula," said Dr. Vail. For schools wanting to make a day of their visit, classroom activities are available at the Lake Michigan Center.

For K-12 educators, Project WET training at the AWRI offers the chance for teachers to get materials that support water education in schools.

The multidisciplinary teachers guide provided to teachers gives a wealth of activities and lessons that engage the learner and provide for increased problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Dennis Nelson, President and CEO, Project WET emphasized, "As tomorrow's leaders and decision makers,



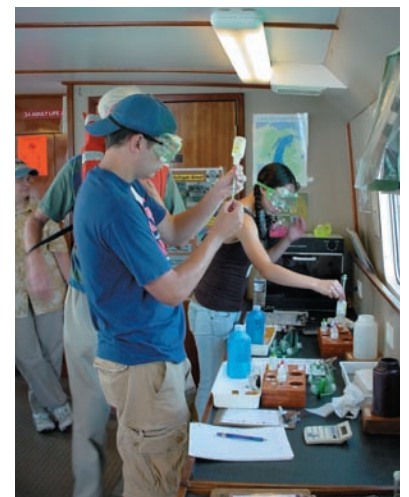
Students log data collected for use by researchers on land.




Teachers receive training throughout the year at the Lake Michigan Center.

children will be tasked with managing and conserving one of the world's most precious resources—water. Believing that an awareness of and respect for water resources can encourage a personal, lifelong commitment of responsibility and positive community participation, Project WET and educators from around the world are teaching children about water and the importance of water stewardship through hands-on science based activities.

According to Dr. Vail, "besides Project WET, we also train teachers in the new Michigan Environmental Education Curriculum Support units and in the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment



*Students test the water quality of Lake Michigan while aboard the *Angus*.*

(GLOBE) student environmental monitoring program. Both are designed to enhance real-world science connections." 

For more information about AWRI outreach and education programs, please contact (616) 331-3048 or email Dr. Vail at vailj@gvsu.edu. Or visit the website at www.gvsu.edu/wri/education.

For more information about GLOBE student monitoring program visit: www.globe.gov.

For more information about Project WET visit: www.projectwet.org.