

Joe E. Heimlich's Introduction of the 2014 Walter E. Jeske Award Winner, October 11, 2014

Dr. Diane Cantrell has been a quiet leader in EE for almost 40 years. During her career she has helped both her state affiliate and NAAEE through critical times. A highly respected and recognized peer, Diane has made significant contributions to both the practice and the leadership of EE.

Dr. Diane Cantrell, a member of NAAEE for over 30 years, chaired Conference Planning (1981), Preconference Workshop (1993 & 1991), and Nominations (2004-2006) Committees, served on the Board, and was elected President-elect (2008-2009) and President (2010-2011). As President during a difficult time, she led the Executive Committee in sharing the responsibilities of Executive Director while chairing the Board. Under her leadership, the organization was restructured to make committees, commissions, and councils more appropriately streamlined and in-line with better practices for membership organizations. The hours--indeed years--of volunteer time she spent making sure that our professional organization emerged from this period in a financially and organizationally strong position are extremely noteworthy and demonstrate her sincere commitment to NAAEE. Starting as a classroom teacher (1971-1975), she earned an M.S. in EE (1976) and Ph.D. in Educational Policy and Leadership (1987) from The Ohio State University.

For three decades, she worked in higher education/teacher preparation (at OSU) and natural resource management (at ODNR), bridging formal and informal/agency education programs. Some of her work that remains seminal for the field -- though often not known as her work -- surrounds learning labs (e.g., the large "Habitats for Learning" project) and models for effective group facilitation around environmental learning. A hallmark of her professional work was partnerships between public school teachers and agency non-formal educators, which she and two colleagues built and nurtured throughout Ohio (1990s). They provided innovative professional learning to hundreds of natural resource and business professionals and classroom teachers, forming long-term partnerships. Thereby, thousands of elementary students experienced active, engaging science instruction grounded in real world environmental content. This outstanding program model was awarded Ohio Eisenhower Math and Science Education and U.S. Department of Education grants. Diane contributed to the evaluation of environmental education programs including studies of the use of Project WILD by teachers who participated in WILD workshops (1980s) and studies of summertime urban conservation crews (2005-2006).

As a practitioner, program leader, professional developer, and evaluator, Diane's publications include dozens of reports, curriculum and program documents, and papers in peer-reviewed journals. Equally important are the scores of conference presentations, workshops, town hall meetings, and planning sessions that she has led at national and regional professional meetings and working sessions. She has been an active member of Ohio Alliance for the Environment and Environmental Education Council of Ohio (including chair, board, president roles, 1977-2005). She participated in the U.S.EPA's National Environmental Education Advisory Council, serving as chair (2002-2004). Her colleagues in Ohio have recognized her with distinguished service awards (OAEE, 1996, and Water Management Association of Ohio, 1998); and in 2004, the EE Council of Ohio recognized her leadership of the ODNR-DSWC EE Section with their Organization Award for outstanding contributions to EE.

Diane's contributions to the field throughout her career that have extended well beyond her salaried duties have earned her the clear recognition of her colleagues at state and national levels. She has exceeded the qualifications for the Jeske award and merits that distinction.