

CHS senior gets Forestry award

Malaree Shields worked at Alton Jones in summertime

LAUREN KNIGHT
lknight@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — The Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization (RIFCO) believes that since the management and study of our natural resources is in the hands of

each generation, the youth who exhibit an understanding and appreciation should be recognized.

For that reason, this year's Youth Forestry Award went to a high school senior in Coventry: Malaree Shields.

According to Marc Tremblay of RIFCO, Shields was selected based on her written

essay and conversations with the organization.

"She had worked at the Alton Jones Summer Camp over the last couple [of] summers, doing education, tree identification walks and nature walks with the students," said Tremblay. "She was promoting awareness in young campers that was in line with

our [mission]."

Shields has worked at the camp for two years. She explained that her interest in the subject began a couple years ago when she enrolled in an environmental course at school.

"This stemmed off an interest in the environmental

See FORESTRY, Page A-2

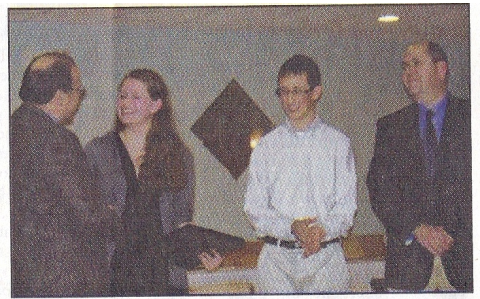


Photo Courtesy RIFCO

RIFCO President Paul Boisvert, at left, presents Malaree Shields with the RIFCO Youth Forestry Award. With Malaree are her brother and father.

Forestry award taken home by Coventry's Shields

Continued from Page A-1

She recalled the tree identification project.

"I wrote the plan the day before and then went out in the morning before the kids woke up," she said.

Shields ventured into the woods and with a dichotomous key found some of Rhode Island's common trees, including white pines, red maples and white oaks.

"It was already published but I adapted it so that the kids wouldn't be flipping through a

100-page book," she explained.

Later that day, Shields sent the kids off with the guides to start identifying trees through a scavenger hunt.

"It posed two questions, such as, 'does it have leaves or needles?' Then, based on your answer, you would move on to the next question," she explained.

At the end of the scavenger hunt, the students were able to identify their tree. However, according to Shields, the im-

portant lesson was discussed after the activity.

"It's important to understand not only how our resources can benefit you but also [how to] continuously use them for sustainable purposes," she said.

Shields asked the children what they could do to contribute and allowed them to voice their suggestions.

"I let them lead the conversation because I feel that they learn best when they put their ideas forward," she said,

adding that suggestions included "using both sides of the notebook paper, cute stuff like that."

At the conclusion, she explained how important trees are to the environment and why they should be treated properly.

Shields was also recognized for her first year actively involved with the Envirothon Team at Coventry High School. The team competes every spring in a nationwide event that tests five subject

areas: forestry, soils, aquatics, wildlife and a special topic they choose to present on, according to Tremblay.

After high school, Shields plans to pursue physiology and secondary education and a minor in environmental science. She received the award at the RIFCO annual dinner meeting in November at the West Greenwich Elk's Hall.

RIFCO is a non-profit organization that focuses on the protection and use of Rhode Island's natural resources.

Starting Saturday, Jan. 28, they will host a series of four workshops on woodland management. The series will provide information on soils, mapping, wildlife habitat, invasive plant and insect identification, control methods and a variety of other subjects. Woodland owners will present on alternative forest products and other small business opportunities.

For more information, contact RIFCO at 568-3421 or visit their website at www.rifco.org.