

## 2016 Program of Year

### WaterFests/River Rallies Sauk River Watershed District

Protection of natural resources needs to start at an early age to be effective. Environmental education integrates various core fundamentals including science and math and introduces how human activities can affect our natural resources. A key component to the District's education program is WaterFests / River Rallies. WaterFests / River Rallies are outdoor classrooms in which local environmental agency professionals communicate with students on various water-related topics, such as the role of wetlands, water properties, and pollution issues. Within the District, every fourth-grade student is invited to participate in a water-based festival. In 2016, over 5,500 fourth grade students and 750 volunteers participated in one of the various water festivals offered throughout the District. If it were not through the partnerships and community involvement, these WaterFests would not continue to be possible.

What the Committee said:

*"An excellent early education program. A significant step in the development of future leaders. An education initiative we should all emulate."*

*"This program is beneficial because it addresses not only the need to educate youth about water-related issues, but goes beyond that by connecting people with their community, water resources, and the environment by encourage active participation in the outdoors, versus passive education. The best way to get people to care about our water and other natural resources is to create that framework in their thinking to allow for interest and protection."*

*"Who wouldn't want to spend the day with over 5,500 4th graders and 750+ volunteers? To spend a day with the next generation of stewards has to be the most rewarding activity of a WD staffer. It makes me want to go back to 4th grade."*



From left: John Magedanz, Dennis Ritter and Lee Bautch,  
Scott Henderson, Gary Barber, Jason Scherping,  
Duane Willenbring and Ruth Schaefer.