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## Aullwood earns environmental award

Honor is third that nature center has received this year

By **HaQuyen Pham**  
Dayton Daily News

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**BUTLER TWP** | It may not be Secretariat, but the Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm has won a Triple Crown anyhow — the Triple Crown of environmentalism, that is.

Aullwood's recent win of the Sol Feinstone Environmental Award is the third honor the park has received for the 2003-04 season.

The other two include the Association of Nature Center Administrators Leadership Award and the Ohio Museum Association Award for institutional excellence.

Aullwood director Charity Krueger was given the ANCA award for her contributions to the center's success and to the profession of nature center leaders.

The OMA award recognized the center's Birds, Flights and the Wrights program, which had elementary school students finding and presenting their discoveries relating natural history to the Wright brothers.

The Sol Feinstone award, established in 1876, recognizes individuals or organizations that have contributed substantially to environmental protection and education. It is the oldest award of its kind and is sponsored by the State University of New York-College of Environmental Science and Forestry, of which philanthropist Feinstone was a graduate.

Aullwood, which tied for first place with Reedy Creek Center in North Carolina, was chosen from the more than 60 centers nominated.

This year marked the first in which nature centers received the Feinstone award, as the honor was originally meant for individuals.

The Feinstone committee of faculty and graduate students decided on a center with across-the-board excellence.

"We looked for a broad base in program quality, how well (the center) incorporated the community and for the degree of access," said Brenda Greenfield, co-director of the Feinstone Environmental Award Program.

Good programs and facilities don't win awards by themselves, however. Krueger said the staff and 700-plus volunteers deserve the most credit.

"It truly is a group effort," she said. "We're always seeking innovation and trying to do things better than the day before."

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Already those efforts are moving forward with plans to create new education programs, improve those already in place and renovate the complex and grounds in time for the center's 50th anniversary in 2007.

So what award-winning experiences does Aullwood have to offer?

Serving the community since 1957, the Aullwood center welcomes about 80,000 visitors per year. Its 200 acres include a wildlife sanctuary, hiking trails and an organic farm, as well as an education center.

Visitors can buy fresh produce at the self-sustaining farm, take the trails through woods, marshes and prairies, or observe hundreds of plant and animal species.

In addition, Aullwood runs after-school programs and has a year-round schedule of events and speakers.

Describing the many projects of the center, Krueger stressed the importance of trying to get the community involved in environmental issues.

"Too many children and adults are glued to their Gameboys or televisions. They aren't outside experiencing nature. We want to help the community understand and appreciate more the treasure they have in their back yards," she said.

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