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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cromwell Teacher Recognized as Environmental Educator of the Year

Cromwell, CT (October, 2012) – Noted scholar William Arthur Ward must have been thinking of someone like Ms. Lynn Kochiss of Cromwell when he stated, “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” Ms. Kochiss, a third grade teacher at Woodside Intermediate School in Cromwell, has been inspiring her students in her classroom and in her environmental club. With her dedication to teaching and nature, it came as no surprise to those who know her that Project Learning Tree CT recently named Ms. Kochiss the 2012-2013 PLT CT Outstanding Educator of the Year.

As a facilitator of the nationally acclaimed PLT environmental education program since 2007, Ms. Kochiss has inspired students to take action to improve the environment at their school, to invite their peers to join their environmental efforts, and to believe they can make a difference. By using the PLT training she acquired through Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA), Ms. Kochiss has been able to spur her students’ enthusiasm to learn. Her third grade students may be found outside on the school grounds searching for geometrical shapes or writing poetry about trees after exploring their shape, texture, and size.

Ms. Kochiss was the founder of Woodside Intermediate School’s Earth Club whose members successfully improved the recycling program in their cafeteria and can be found collaborating during recess about environmental concerns at the school. Her students are poised and articulate as well as confident about the difference they are making in their environment. This stems from Ms. Kochiss’ leadership and facilitation of teaching and learning. She wholeheartedly embodies PLT’s philosophy of teaching students how to think, not what to think, about the environment.

Cromwell Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Evaluation, Ms. Paula M. Talty, Ed.D. nominated Ms. Kochiss for PLT CT Outstanding Educator of the Year, noting that her colleague “has consistently gone above and beyond normal expectations for teachers. Indeed she not only creates an energized and positive climate in her classroom, but she also strives to bring that energy throughout our school community.” In 2010, Ms. Kochiss served as a strong voice in the development of Connecticut’s Environmental Literacy Plan for education. Ms. Talty praises Ms. Kochiss for working to dovetail environmental literacy with standard curriculum, offering professional learning to her colleagues. “Her colleagues greatly appreciate her efforts and are enthusiastic about revising curriculum to support the work Lynn has done,” remarked Ms. Talty.

Ms. Kochiss’ magic touch is felt far beyond her classroom. She has been a volunteer for CFPA as a WalkCT Family Guide since 2007. She has led WalkCT Family Rambles throughout Middlesex County, and this year created a unique Connecticut Trails Day event for Cromwell at River Highlands State Park. She also designs distinctive rambles for Special Needs groups. Her *Mother’s Day Walk* this year was a custom ramble for the Connecticut Family Support Network for families with wheelchair-bound children.

PLT CT recognized Ms. Kochiss as the PLT CT Outstanding Educator of the Year, 2012-201 at the October 2012 CT Urban Forest Council and Annual Forest Forum, at the Aqua Turf in Southington. Ms. Kochiss was awarded a hand-cut plaque created from a sustainably harvested local tree that was crafted by a local forester. She also received a gift certificate to purchase nature-related supplies for

her Earth Club and classroom to help her students continue their explorations of the schoolyard and outdoor community.

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Project Learning Tree (www.plt.org) is an award-winning environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators, parents, and community leaders working with youth from preschool to grade 12. PLT helps empower students to take action to improve the environment at their schools, communities, and neighborhoods, based on what they learn in the classroom.

In Connecticut, PLT is sponsored and coordinated by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (www.ct.gov/deep) and Connecticut Forest & Park Association (www.ctwoodlands.org), a nonprofit organization serving Connecticut to protect forests, parks, walking trails, and open spaces for future generations. CFPA offers hands-on, interdisciplinary professional development workshops for teachers and other educators on forests and related natural resource topics using the PLT curriculum. For more about PLT CT including upcoming workshops, visit www.ctwoodlands.org/educ or the online events calendar at www.ctwoodlands.org/events.