

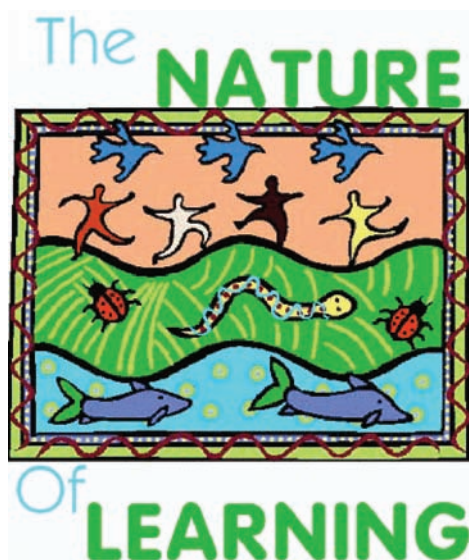
# First Place Winners in The Nature of Learning Art Contest

Stafford Township Intermediate School  
Stafford Township, Ocean County, New Jersey

The Nature of Learning, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's "outdoor classroom," experience-based environmental education program, consistently seeks to connect children with nature. One of the most important goals of The Nature of Learning is to build environmental awareness into all aspects of the partner schools' curricula. So when the New Jersey Field Office began to plan this issue on environmental education, we realized it offered us a wonderful opportunity to integrate ecology with the arts at Stafford Intermediate, then our Nature of Learning school. We decided to sponsor a contest for

student essays, pictures, and poems on environmental themes and publish the first place entries in each category in Field Notes. Through Hooked On Fishing—Not On Drugs, a program (sponsored by the Future Fisherman Foundation) in which Stafford fifth-graders participate each May, students are taken to nearby Lake Manahawkin, where they are given instruction and practice in the skills of angling. The Art Contest in May 2006 encouraged students to reflect on their experiences through drawing or writing poetry or essays.

At the end of the school year, the New Jersey Field Office's Nature of Learning program presented awards to the students winning first, second and third place and honorable mention in each of the three categories. (An article and a picture of the presentation may be viewed on our website, <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/njfieldoffice>.) These pages proudly present the first-prize-winning drawing, essay, and poem of our contest.



The Nature of Learning's lead teacher, Ms. Cathy O'Leary (left), and the NJFO's James Cramer (right), with the award winners from Stafford Township Intermediate School Nature of Learning program in Manahawkin, New Jersey.

