



# Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI)

## Public Announcement for Immediate Release

04/17/2023

*The Environmental Education Association of Illinois (EEAI) requests the following announcement to be considered for immediate release:*

Chelsea Prahl of Urbana, IL, has been named EEAI's **2023 [Non-Formal Environmental Educator of the Year](#)**. This competitive award is presented to an Illinois educator for exhibiting innovative and exemplary efforts in providing environmental education opportunities for general audiences. Nominations are peer-reviewed by a committee of EEAI members from across the state.

Chelsea Prahl is the Environmental Education Coordinator at the Urbana Park District, where she works with students and schools, teen programs, community garden services, and community outreach. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are of paramount importance in everything that she does and oversees.

When local schools struggled to afford transportation for field trips, Chelsea created the "[Connecting Classrooms with Nature](#)" sponsorship program. She continually solicits donations from individuals and businesses, and pairs those funds with classrooms who have applied for a free field trip.

To help address food insecurity and foster garden education, Chelsea has been deploying grant funds to create and distribute plants and container garden grow kits to households in need. She acts as the Urbana Park District's liaison for [Solidarity Gardens C-U](#) in addition to managing two organic community garden locations in Urbana.

Presented with Champaign-Urbana's need for teen engagement, Chelsea has developed a suite of opportunities for teens throughout the year: [Camp FRESH](#) is an immersive, community-service-learning summer camp; [FRESH Crew Teen Nature Workdays](#) provide opportunities for teens to work in local natural areas and Solidarity Gardens; and [FRESH Teen Hangout Zones](#) are free Friday evening programs with food and a wide array of activity options. Additionally, Chelsea oversees the Urbana Park District's Counselor-in-Training and Junior Counselor teen leadership development programs during the summer camp season.

As co-chair of the Urbana Park District's "[You Belong Here](#)" team, Chelsea plays a vital role in creating a welcoming and safe space for diverse participants and staff. She serves as an outstanding role model for the Urbana-Champaign community as well as for other agencies looking to improve on their inclusion practices.

Chelsea's work impacts thousands of school-aged youth each year, fostering lifelong relationships among children, their community and the environment. This work has never been more valuable than it is today. The Environmental Education Association of Illinois is proud to recognize Chelsea Prahl for her outstanding commitment to providing high-quality environmental education experiences for everyone she has the opportunity to work with.



For more information regarding this release, contact:

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*EEAI nurtures and sustains a diverse network of environmental educators in Illinois. We foster connections, improve environmental literacy, and amplify underrepresented voices in the environmental education sphere. With a team of dedicated staff, engaged board, active facilitators, members and partners, EEAI offers support to a wide range of Illinois educators through professional development, grants, resources, and community.*