

## Environment & Science

# These Lehigh Valley environmental education projects are getting a boost from Pa.

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*Courtesy / Nurture Nature Center*

Students who participated in the Youth Climate Summit of the Lehigh Valley in 2023 view Nurture Nature Center's "Science on a Sphere" during a presentation about climate given by Jeff Mucklin, a senior educator at the center.

BETHLEHEM, Pa. — Two Lehigh Valley environmental education projects have been awarded state grants as

part of a \$980,000 statewide effort to promote environmental education and stewardship across the state.

“These projects help connect people to the ways we can protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, and many of them encourage learning at any age whether you're a kid or an adult,” said Jessica Shirley, acting secretary of the state Department of Environmental protection, in a news release.

“Nearly every grant we are awarding will support people in environmental justice communities to improve educational opportunities and people’s connections to their environment.”

The Lehigh County Conservation District was awarded \$5,000 for its “Bee-utiful Watersheds: Making Climate Change and Pollination Connections” program to deliver three outdoor education field experiences to 325 students, officials said.

Through the program, participants will “expand their understanding of how human actions can contribute to environmental issues involving climate change, water quality of local watersheds and pollination.”

The Nurture Nature Center in Easton was awarded \$4,998 for its “Connecting Youth to Local Watersheds: A Place-based Multi-disciplinary Watershed Education Program.” The program will expand the center’s Create and Learn series and youth watershed education programming “to connect Lehigh Valley youth to their local waterways,” according to the release.

The program will build stewardship and resilience through science education, hands-on creative activities and field studies.

Fifty-six projects across the commonwealth received funding, officials said.

*Funding for 48 projects (97%) support educational activities that will benefit people living in environmental justice areas.*

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

“The DEP Environmental Education Grants program prioritizes proposals that engage youth or adults who live, work or attend school in environmental justice areas,” according to the release. “Funding for 48 projects (97%) support educational activities that will benefit people living in environmental justice areas.”

An environmental justice, or “EJ,” area are census tracts in which 20% or more people live at or below the federal poverty line, and/or 30% or more identify as a non-white minority, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the federal guidelines.

Of the Lehigh Valley’s major cities, Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, all have tracts categorized as an Environmental Justice Area, according

to PennEnviroScreen, the state's mapping and screening tool.

Find more information on the state Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Education Grant program on the agency's website.