



Metropolitan Greenspaces Program

Environmental Education Grant

Project #924575

Raindrops to Refuge – Homeowner Education and  
Stewardship Program

Final Report

July 2004

**Grant Report Attachments:**

- **Final Report**
- **Payroll Invoice**
- **Matching Funds Spreadsheet**
- **Request for Reimbursement Form**
- **Tax ID Form**
- **Volunteer Hours Tracking Document**
- **CD of Digital Photo Documentation and Flyers**
- **Copies of Newspaper Articles**
- **Watershed Guidebook**

## **Final Report**

### **Project Summary of Grant Activities:**

#### **Workshops**

April 5, 2003	Neighbor to Neighbor Workshop, 6 attendees
June 18, 2003	Neighbor to Neighbor Workshop, 11 attendees
August 27, 2003	Neighbor to Neighbor (Community) Workshop, 15 attendees
September 14, 2003	Community Wide Workshop, Watershed Fair, 60 participants 15 volunteers
February 18, 2004	Community Wide Workshop, Environmental Community Service Project Information Nite, 16 participants.
April 10, 2004	Community Wide Workshop, Naturescaping, 18 participants.

#### **Greenway Walks**

February 15, 2003	Urban Naturalist Mike Houck, bird walk, 28 attendees
March 8, 2003	R2R Christine Egan, refuge walk, 11 attendees
April 12, 2003	City of Sherwood, Natural Resources, Ken Huffer, restoration projects, 7 attendees.
May 17, 2003	Backyard Birdshop, Jim Black, bird walk, 4 attendees
June 21, 2003	Deputy Ranger Chris Lapp, refuge walk, 8 attendees
July 19, 2003	Chris Neamtzu, Sherwood's historic trees, 2 attendees
August 27, 2003	Bill Ryan, Twilight Creatures, 30 attendees
September 13, 2003	Jim Closson, Open Space Conservation, 10 attendees
October 30, 2003	Kim Strassburg, Refuge Walk, 55 attendees
May 15, 2004	Songbird Festival, Habitat Walks, 50 attendees
June 5, 2004	Nature Art Walk, 30 attendees

## **Brief Description of Projects**

### **Watershed guidebook**

The Watershed guidebook is a compelling and user-friendly guidebook composed of information presented in Neighbor to Neighbor and Community Wide Workshops, along with maps and details about Sherwood's watersheds, City of Sherwood's greenways and open spaces, and the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge. Information for the guidebook was drawn from existing publications promoting watershed stewardship, water conservation, stormwater management, natural gardening techniques, erosion control, citizen monitoring, land conservation, etc. The first printing (300 copies) will be free and distributed to new and old residents at community events and R2R workshops. The guidebook serves as a resource to reinforce concepts for workshop participants and to educate those who cannot attend the workshops. Contact information for volunteer opportunities is also included.

### **Water bill inserts**

In April 2003, R2R's first water bill insert was mailed out to Sherwood citizens. It included tips on natural gardening, information on R2R, and a discount coupon to purchase native plants from a local nursery. The July/August insert contained water wise tips and a discount for Alto's Chevron for an oil change and car wash. The Nov/Dec. insert contained household tips and a discount for Grimm's Fuel garden mulch. There were a total of 12,000 inserts mailed. We received funding and assistance from Clean Water Services, Tualatin Valley Water District, and Lazerquick for this project. During 2003, water conservation messages/announcements were also printed on the actual water bills.

R2R has received funding from Clean Water Services to continue this successful project. Three additional inserts will be mailed out this year with the first one appearing in the 2004 July/August bills. This insert highlights native plants and a coupon for Clean Water Services native plant poster. Approximately 4,800 inserts will be mailed in this cycle.

### **Website**

R2R now has a website independent of the City of Sherwood. It was designed by AmeriCorps volunteer Julia Crown and can viewed at [www.raindrops2refuge.org](http://www.raindrops2refuge.org).

### **Demonstration Garden**

R2R has been working with the City of Sherwood and Murase Associates to incorporate native plants in Sunset Park for Phase 2 and Phase 3 construction. Ideas that have been presented include eco-roofs and eco-lawns, stormwater garden, courtyard with raised beds, arbors and benches, and pervious trail surfaces. A native garden will be constructed during the fall of 2004.

### **Community Events**

R2R has been involved with Migratory Songbird Day, the Sherwood Community Fair, Discovery Day, Music on the Green, Robin Hood Festival and many others. We have used the Enviroscape display at these events to teach watershed health. On September 14,

2003, R2R held its first open house to help launch the Sherwood Watershed Action Plan. The event was called the, Sherwood Watershed Fair. It was a family event that included a native plant sale, presentations for adults and children, free refreshments, and 15 partner educational tables and displays.

#### **Enviroscape Watershed Display Model**

An Enviroscape Watershed Display Model was donated to R2R by a Sherwood resident. The model is used in classrooms and at community events to show youth and adults how land use activities affect watershed health and water quality. Many of R2R's partners have also been able to use the display during their events and programs.

### **Evaluations and Comments on the Project's Goals and Objectives:**

Raindrops to Refuge (R2R) developed a Homeowner Education Program that provides a public service by promoting better stewardship of public greenways, protection of wildlife habitat and improvement in Sherwood's water quality. By helping suburban residents understand their connection to the watershed, creeks, greenways, and the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge they can see how their actions affect the ecosystem around them. By teaching them how to incorporate wildlife and watershed friendly practices in their own homes and yards and providing resources, they will be better equipped to become good stewards.

One of the projects developed from the Raindrops to Refuge – Homeowner Education and Stewardship Program were, Neighbor to Neighbor Workshops. During these workshops watershed residents learned about the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, City greenways and open spaces, watershed functions and the impact of homeowner landscaping practices. The workshops presented information on fish and wildlife habitats, Sherwood's water quality, alternative pest and weed management techniques, water conservation methods, native plants, and how to get involved with environmental projects within the local community. With the information presented, homeowners were motivated to alter behaviors that were harming watershed health and are motivated to take actions to improve these natural resources.

In the Neighbor to Neighbor Workshop formats, homeowner hosts were responsible for inviting their friends and neighbors to attend the event and serve as the workshop co-host. R2R worked with the hosts to develop invitations, flyers, and other promotional materials. R2R also scheduled the presenters, brought handouts and materials, provided native plants for departing gifts, publicized the event, and confirmed guests. The workshops were typically three hours in length. In addition to the workshop, participants were also invited to take part in a free pre-workshop bird or nature walk along the Cedar Creek Greenway with an R2R guide. These 60-minute walks were scheduled one hour before the workshop.

We had a total of 32 participants in the Neighbor to Neighbor workshops. These workshops were designed to be smaller venues but we felt that there could have been more participants. Workshop evaluations showed us that the three hour workshop plus the optional pre walks were too time consuming. We hosted one pre walk before our first workshop and had a small attendance. The evaluations also showed us that many people felt uncomfortable going into another person's house and thought that these workshops would be better served if they were held in a public facility. On our third workshop we advertised that it would be held at the Sherwood Senior Center and sent out invitations to a small Sherwood neighborhood. In this format we saw our greatest attendance. We then decided that future workshops would be Community Wide to maximize our presenter's time and audience size.

Community Wide workshops are hosted by R2R and are held in public facilities such as the Sherwood Police Station, Sherwood Senior Center, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue Community Room, and Sherwood YMCA. Community Wide Workshops are advertised in the Oregonian, Sherwood Gazette, Community Newspapers, and by flyers posted in the Sherwood Community. The concepts in the Neighbor to Neighbor workshops are applied during the Community Wide Workshops at a larger scale. Three workshops were presented during the grant period. They were the Sherwood Watershed Fair (native gardening, northwest trees, and water stories), Environmental Community Service Night, and Naturescaping.

During the Community Wide Workshops we saw greater attendance numbers and participants enjoyed the wealth of information presented. We are seeing more people landscape with native plants to reduce watering and pesticide and herbicide use; they are avoiding purchasing and planting exotic invasive species; and protecting existing or restoring fish and wildlife habitat in their yards and along public greenways and open spaces. As a result of these workshops we have seen an increase in the number of Sherwood residents participating in the City of Sherwood's Open Space Stewardship Program. The Open Space Stewardship Program involves the citizens of Sherwood in the restoration, enhancement, and preservation of Sherwood's wetlands, riparian areas, streams, and upland areas.

Through the Metro Greenspaces grant program R2R was also able to find a volunteer to donate funds for the purchase of an Enviroscope Display Model. The Enviroscope Watershed/Nonpoint Source model demonstrates how different land uses affect water quality and represents real communities and watersheds. The model is available for use by all of R2R's partners. It has been used in classroom presentations and at community events. Participants (both young and old) who have gone through the model's exercises are impressed with the model's message and how the model can be readily used as an example of the Sherwood Community.

The Sherwood Watershed Guidebook started out with a volunteer taking the lead on the project, it has since developed into seven volunteers working on it simultaneously. It is a guidebook that is meant to serve as a resource and reference book. It provides information on Sherwood's watersheds and tips to help protect water quality. Topics

include: a watershed map, background information on R2R, a greenway map, information on Sherwood's greenways, why natural areas should be protected, information on the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge and map, list of potential group projects and activities for kids, how to contact R2R's partners, and a list of resources.

The guidebook project was very successful and well received. Future undertakings of projects of this nature require a lot of time and patience. One of the things that slowed us down was that our lead volunteer moved out of state. It then became the work of the Coordinator until, several volunteers stepped in to assist. Several sections of this guidebook were written by different authors. It was a challenge to make sure that the guidebook had an even flow in regards to different writing styles. The guidebook has gone through 4 revisions with the help of two professional volunteer editors. The result is a guidebook that all of the subcommittees of R2R, the R2R Advisory Committee, Sherwood residents, and partners were able to provide input on.

The water bill inserts and announcements were another component of Raindrops to Refuge – Homeowner Education and Stewardship program. The inserts and announcements provided “helpful hints” for seasonal yard care and alternative weed and pest management, and announced upcoming events and activities sponsored by R2R and our partners. Feedback from Sherwood residents on the inserts content and other issues of concern were used to update and improve the project.

R2R worked closely with Clean Water Services and Tualatin Valley Water District to wordsmith the insert announcements (65 characters, 7 lines) and designed three water bill inserts. R2R also worked with local business owners to provide coupons as part of the insert for car washes, native plants, and mulch. R2R printed the inserts on lightweight paper to avoid additional postage costs. This outreach and education program provided a cost-effective way to educate residents about watershed health and benefits so that negative behaviors can be altered to help improve watershed functions. The inserts and announcements provided resources for homeowners to take action, be good watershed stewards and recommend actions for alternative landscaping options for their neighbors, friends, and homeowner associations. We found that by supplying a discount coupon for environmentally friendly services and products; provides an incentive for individuals to alter behaviors that are negatively impacting watershed health. Approximately, 12,000 inserts were mailed out in 2003 with another 12,000 planned for 2004.

In this grant program we tried to offer free pre-workshop bird walks. We had a very small turn outs for the walks. It was then decided to concentrate on the workshops rather than the bird walks. We were able to incorporate many of the themes that would have been discussed during the bird walks in our Greenway Walk project. R2R partnered with the Sherwood Merrywalkers to develop an interpretive “greenway walks” program for watershed residents to learn about the importance of the public greenway, watershed functions, stormwater runoff, and connectivity with the Refuge. The free 2-mile, guided walks were held monthly (except winter months), on Saturday mornings, to maximize attendance. Guides highlighted natural areas along the greenways, with four walks extending out to the Refuge. Currently, the Refuge is not open to the public. R2R was

able to work with staff members at the Refuge to show walk participants connectivity and impact the Sherwood urban areas have on the Refuge lands.

R2R and the Sherwood Merrywalkers publicized the events at community bulletin boards, with newspaper articles, newsletters, websites, water bills, marqueees, student backpack mail, and flyers. There were also handouts and calendar items available to walk participants about upcoming activities and continuing education information. We had a total of 235 walking participants during this grant period. We have decided to keep hosting the Greenway Walks, but offer them quarterly rather than monthly. R2R does not currently have an Assistant Coordinator at this time due to funding. The Assistant Coordinator, an AmeriCorps member was instrumental in implementing the walks.

Our AmeriCorps member also developed R2R's website. She found a nonprofit web hosting organization and easy to use software to design the website. The website counter, before being reset had approximately 300 hits registered. R2R's website can be found at the following address: [www.raindrops2refuge.org](http://www.raindrops2refuge.org). The website contains our mission, information on Sherwood's watersheds, ways to volunteer with our subcommittees, events, greenway walks, tips, internet links, a contact us button, and a survey. We have received funding to continue operation of the website through April 2005 and will look for future funding.

By offering free, multiple and different ways of learning, R2R encouraged a large portion of Sherwood's population to participate in the Homeowner Education and Stewardship Program. We have also explored ways to incorporate families and children into homeowner workshops and greenway walks (plant bingo, water stories) to attract both children and adults, and created many family-friendly learning environments (Sherwood Watershed Fair). Our multi-pronged approach educated homeowners about the practices in managing their homes and yards that will positively impact our greenways, the Refuge, and watersheds and will influence how they relate to and use these areas. We have also found that including cost-saving practices and free plants in our programs, act as strong incentives for positive homeowner actions. Through these different approaches, we saw a transformation in the way residents viewed their connection to and behavior in Sherwood's mix of urban and rural environments.

Raindrops to Refuge would like to thank the USFWS and Metro Greenspaces program for the opportunity to enhance our Homeowner Education and Stewardship Program.