



Good Neighbors Earns the Award of Excellence from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects



Left: NPS Ranger Celena Illuzzi introduces Brookline 3rd graders to a drawing-from-observation activity they will tackle while exploring the restored Fairsted landscape to discover how the selection and placement of plant materials affects the look, feel and function of place. Below: A 3rd grader from the William Henderson Inclusion School in Dorchester adds finishing touches to a model created to communicate her team's park design ideas. Both photos by Joel Veak. Courtesy of NPS, Olmsted NHS.

On Thursday, April 28, staff from Brookline's Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and partners were recognized by the Boston Society of Landscape Architects (BSLA) for their innovative new Education program, *Good Neighbors: Landscape Design and Community Building*. One of 23 winning projects selected through juried review, *Good Neighbors* received the prestigious Award of Excellence reserved for a single entry representing an outstanding contribution to the profession of landscape architecture.

Recognizing that the future of public parks depends upon citizen stewardship, Olmsted NHS collaborated with local public school teachers, prominent Olmsted scholars, and landscape architects to create *Good Neighbors: Landscape Design and Community Building*, a curriculum-based education

program engaging third graders in learning how thoughtfully-designed parks strengthen communities. With Olmsted NHS as the primary setting, visiting students gain an appreciation of the physical, social, and psychological value of public parks. Through hands-on activities in the site's restored landscape, historic design office, and newly-rehabilitated model shop, they explore the history, art, science, and civics of landscape design, and park stewardship.

Prior to their field trip to Olmsted National Historic Site, students are visited in their classroom by National Park Service educators, who discuss with them the meaning of landscape and the life, work, and legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted, our nation's most prominent urban park designer. Subsequent to the visit, the students are encouraged to visit a local Emerald Necklace park designed



by Olmsted, assess its current condition relative to evidence in historic images and plans, and write a letter to public officials with observations and stewardship recommendations. Through a BSLA adopt-a-classroom program, many students also have an opportunity to visit a Boston-area landscape architecture firm. They get to experience first-hand and learn about contemporary design practice, particularly the creation and reclamation of public parks.

Good Neighbors was first conceptualized in 2005 and was developed, piloted, and evaluated from 2006 to 2008 in partnership with nationally-recognized Olmsted scholars, landscape architects, and classroom teachers. Prior to 2011, more than 500 students, 125 teachers, and 60 landscape designers and park managers experienced the program. According to National Park Service Education Specialist Liza Stearns, 750 Boston-area students, primarily from the Brookline and Boston public schools, will take part in the program this year. "In addition," Stearns adds, "the *Good Neighbors* programming model will be rolled out soon as a replicable model for communities nationwide. Students in and around other cities with Olmsted-designed landscapes will learn how these parks strengthen their communities and begin to imagine their own role in the stewardship of these landscapes."

One key role that *Good Neighbors* is expected to play for Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in the coming years is to increase outreach to urban youth. Superintendent Myra Harrison emphasizes that "given changing demographics and the enormous appeal of new technologies, it is critically important for the National Park Service to reach our urban audiences and offer place-based education that is lively and engaging. We are honored that BSLA recognizes the *Good Neighbors* program as achieving those goals." Education Specialist Stearns adds, "We particularly want to engage youth who spend little time outdoors, live in neighborhoods surrounding Olmsted-designed parks, yet may not use and might even fear these spaces."



Left: A 3rd grader from the Edith Baker School in Brookline explains how the park he and classmates have designed will help strengthen the community. Photo by Joel Veak. Courtesy of NPS, Olmsted NHS.



Left to Right: **Roy Thompson**, Industrial Designer; **Geoff Tegnell**, Curriculum Coordinator for K-8 Social Studies, Public Schools of Brookline; **Gretchen Albertini**, 3rd grade teacher, Edward Devotion School, Brookline; **Celena Illuzzi**, Interpretive Specialist, Frederick Law Olmsted NHS; **Adrienne Sharigian**, Student Conservator Associate, Volunteer Coordinator; **Sam Valentine**, Student Conservator Associate, Education Intern; **Liza Stearns**, Education Specialist, Frederick Law Olmsted NHS; **Martha MacDonald**, 3rd Grade Teacher, Edith Baker School, Brookline; **Marilyn Saba**, Visual Arts Teacher, William Henderson Inclusion School Dorchester (retired); **Lee Farrow Cook**, Site Manager, Frederick Law Olmsted NHS; **Matt Griffing**, Student Conservator Associate, Communications Intern; **Myra Harrison**, Superintendent, Frederick Law Olmsted NHS; **Patricia Suhrcke**, Treasurer, Friends of Fairsted

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For more information about *Good Neighbors Landscape Design and Community Building*, please visit www.nps.gov/frla/forteachers.htm or call the

site weekdays at 617-566-1689. For further information on the BSLA 2011 awards, please visit www.bslaweb.org.



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