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ENV. PROT. COMM  
OF H.C.

**APPLICATION FOR POLLUTION RECOVERY FUND ASSISTANCE**

**DATE OF APPLICATION:** July 28, 2005

**A. BASIC ASSISTANCE**

1. Applicant: The legal name of the applicant/organization, the organizational unit and the complete mailing address of the applicant.

Name: Hillsborough Educational Foundation, Inc.

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 2010 E. Hillsborough Ave., Suite 212, Tampa, FL 33610

2. Project Manager Information: Give name and title of the representative of the applicant who will be the Environmental Protection Commission's principle contact concerning this application

Name Paul Nesbitt

Title Vice President

Address 2010 E. Hillsborough Ave., Suite 212, Tampa, FL 33610

Phone Number 813 231-1937

Project Title Nature's Classroom Capital Campaign – Phase III

Project Time Start: May, 2006 End: October, 2007

Total Cost of Project \$ 3,410,422

Total EPC share requested \$ 188,000 For a two-year project

3. Assistance Type: **New or Renewal** (check one)

New - Award of funds for initial request within the project period.

Renewal - Award of funds for a project beyond the current project period.

4. Project Location: The specific location(s) of the project. (Attach Site Map)

Nature's Classroom is located just east of I-75 off of Morris Bridge Road (see maps in attachment B-1)

5. Is the Project for:

Restoration of a polluted area

Mitigation of the effects of pollution

Pollution Control Activity to prevent or minimize pollution

Educational

6. Is the Project directed toward restoring an identified "polluted area" (a geographic area destroyed or altered by dredging or filling or contaminated by an emission or discharge), or toward terminating an identified pollution source?

Identify and explain:

The project is directed toward helping prevent the pollution of our rivers and Waterways, and the ecosystem surrounding the Hillsborough River specifically. Nature's Classroom is an outdoor environmental education program located on 365 acres of land along the Hillsborough River. Students explore relevant environmental concepts through hands-on investigations.

7. Is the harm or potential harm to health, safety or welfare of the public or wildlife actual or potential? Does the project seek to alleviate actual or potential harm and what is the severity of the harm and the causal relationship between the "pollution" and the harm?

Identify and explain:

Nature's Classroom is located in an environmentally sensitive area, just a few miles from the juncture of three interstate highways with a rapidly increasing suburban encroachment. The total program capacity is about 14,000 students and 1,000 teachers per year. The program consists of eight to ten classes of students rotating through six activities during three days of on-site instruction, including: a) The role that water plays in shaping the biological communities along the Hillsborough River; b) The adaptations of organisms to live in these communities; c) The chemical and biological health of the river; d) The role people play in maintaining the river as a healthy, living system; and e) The relationship between the watershed and the City of Tampa's water supply. Students learn to make the correlations between people and their effects on the environment through this structured curriculum. It is our belief that adults who had powerful environmental experiences when they were children will make good environmental decisions in life. This program reaches all sixth graders in the nation's 9th largest school district. It provides these students with experiences and an understanding of nature that they carry with them into their adult life.

8. How long has the pollution existed or how long before any harm will be evident?

N/A

9. Identify and describe how the project proposes to alleviate the pollution (addressing technical, practical, and cost effectiveness issues):

Thirty years of use, flooding, fire and termite damage have required the need for extensive renovation of the Nature's Classroom facilities in order to continue the program. This project request is for support of the final phase of our capital improvements campaign. Construction plans in this third and final phase include construction of new animal habitats, and restoration of land areas housing the old habitats, with creation of native plant and butterfly gardens.

10. Is the polluted area one which has previously been subject to commission enforcement and, if so, when and what was the result?

N/A

11. If no actual pollution exists and no prior commission enforcement action has occurred, does the project otherwise enhance pollution control activities within the County?

The Nature's Classroom program was recognized as a model of excellence in environmental education by the Florida Department of Education. The program received the Sharing Success in Environmental Education Program Award, which recognizes programs in Florida's public schools, districts and community colleges that encourage effective teaching and learning through environmental education. This program cannot be conducted without adequate Facilities, and this construction project not only enhances the program, but protects it from becoming ineffective.

12. Can this Project be divided into separate and independent parts, and if so,  
a) what are they?

This third phase of the Nature's Classroom construction plan consists of several components, the largest in scope being the construction of the new habitat shelters for most of the Florida wildlife that is housed on the grounds. As part of the environmental curriculum, students get to see (and smell!) animals that are indigenous to Florida, some which are on endangered watch lists. The animals include not only smaller mammals such as raccoons, opossums, and red and gray fox, but larger mammals as well, like the Florida black bear and the Florida panther. Another primary component would be the undertaking of restoration efforts on the land that the animals currently occupy, once they move into the new shelters. This section of land is comprised of approximately 2 acres, located in a flood plain zone. It is the wish of the Nature's Classroom instructors to rehabilitate the land so they can provide instructional, hands-on experiences

pertaining to native flora, and can maximize land use. It also provides a viable forum for the students to enhance their educational learning. It is this land restoration component for which we are seeking EPC funding support.

b) how would the costs be allocated between them?

Each component has a projected cost for completion based upon construction estimates and bids.

c) would the applicant be willing to accept only partial funding?

We accept partial funding with the understanding that recognition opportunities and scope of work would correspond with the size of the gift.

13: Are other funding sources committed to the project? Yes

How much and for what?

We've received much support for our \$3.6 million capital campaign for Nature's Classroom. Gifts of \$100,000 or more have come from organizations such as TECO Energy, Publix Super Markets Charities, the Frank E. Duckwall Foundation, Bright House Network, W.D. Charities, and Verizon. Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) has committed more than \$1 million toward this campaign. For this third and last phase, Suncoast Schools Federal Credit Union has already committed \$50,000 to fund the Florida Panther habitat.

14. What other funding sources may be available and how much?

We are actively seeking funding for the mammal habitats from organizations such as Lazy Days, the Frank E. Duckwall Foundation, and Rooms to Go. We are also seeking inkind donations to reduce the construction costs of the facilities, and grant requests from individuals and foundations.

15. Why do you believe that this Project is of sufficient importance to justify the expenditure of Pollution Recovery Funds?

Nature's Classroom is building a well-educated community base by sharing this facility and its programs with our youth and community who will someday be responsible for voting on decisions that affect the community's resources and surroundings.

16. Will the project enhance the value of private property, and if so, whose?

The land Nature's Classroom is situated on 365 acres of pristine land owned by Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). While any capital improvements belong to SWFWMD, they have a continuing 30-year contract that leases the land to the School District of Hillsborough County for this environmental education program.

#### B. ATTACHMENTS

**All applicants must submit responses to the following as attachments corresponding to the indicated numbers:**

1. Please provide a detailed map of the project site.
2. Principal Investigator and Key Personnel - Present a biographical sketch of the principal Investigator incorporating the following information: Name, Address, Phone Number, Education, Background and other qualifying experience for the project.
3. Project Narrative - Please provide a narrative statement describing the project that includes the following:
  - a) Objectives of this Project - Describe the principal and subordinate environmental objectives of the project. Pinpoint any relevant physical, economic, social, financial, institutional or other problems requiring solution.
  - b) Results and/or Benefits Expected - Identify specific environmental results and/or benefits to be derived from the project. Include all primary and secondary benefits accruing to the grantee, to the pollution served, and in general, to the public and environment.

d) General Project Information - Discuss the criteria that will be used to evaluate the results and successes of the project as well its relationship to other work planned, anticipated or underway.

4. Scope of Work – Provide a detailed scope of work for the proposed project. List in chronological order a schedule of accomplishments, progress, or milestones that are anticipated over the length of the project.

5. Budget Information – Please itemize expenditures necessary to perform project using the following format:

**BUDGET CATEGORIES**

	PRF Funds	Federal	Applicant	State	Other
<b>a. Personnel</b>					
1.					
2.					
<b>b. Administrative</b>					
<b>c. Materials</b>					
<b>d. Contractual</b>					
<b>e. Construction</b>					
<b>f. Other</b>					
<b>g. Total Direct Charges (Sum of a. to f.)</b>					

**C. SUBMITTAL OF APPLICATION**

Please submit a total of five (5) applications (one original and four (4) copies / one of which can be in electronic format as a CD) to:

Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County

Environmental Resources Management Division  
Attn: Tom Ash / Pollution Recovery Fund  
3629 Queen Palm Dr., Tampa, Florida 33619

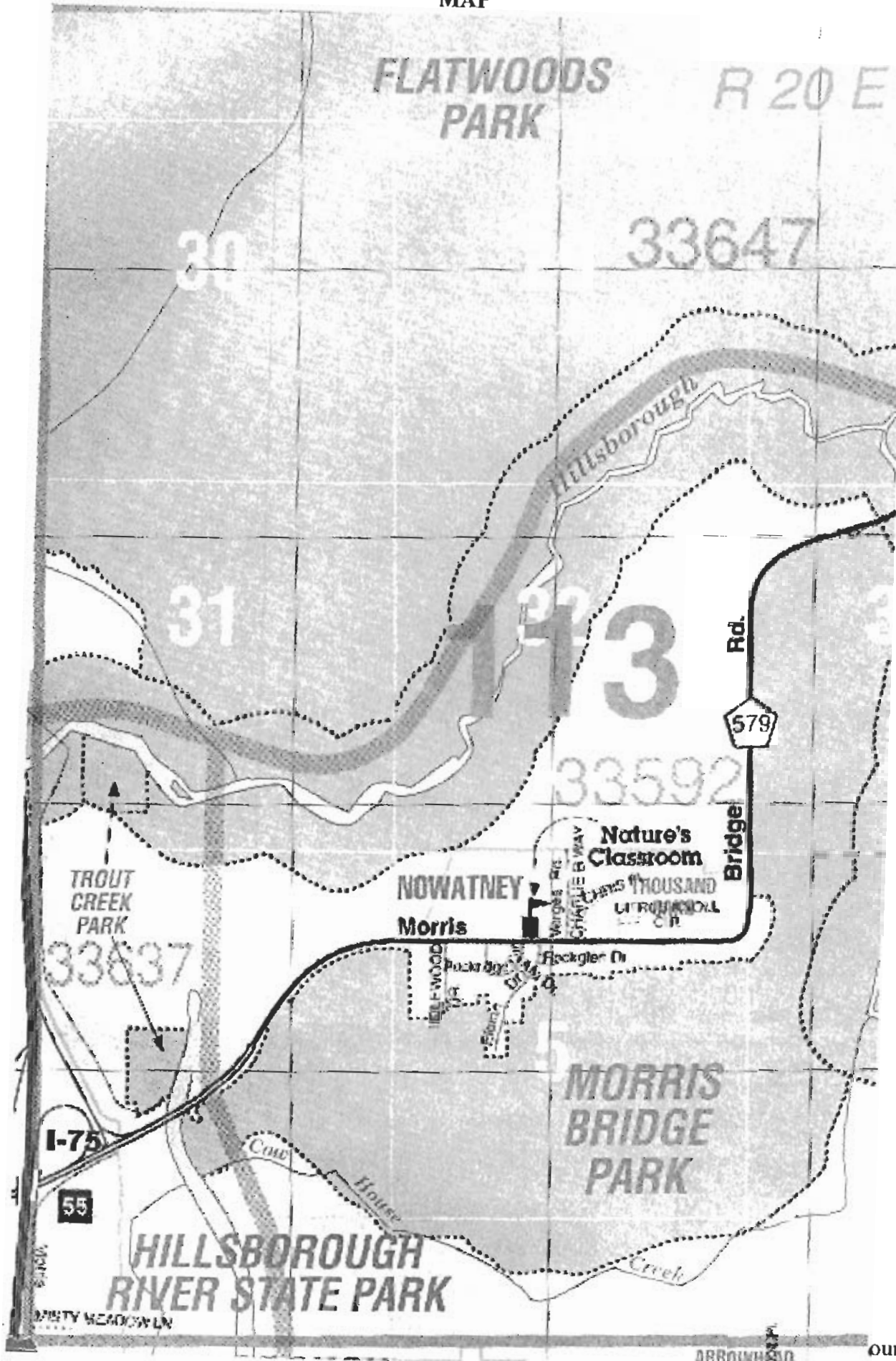
***Completed applications must be received at the above address by  
5:00pm (EDT), August 1, 2005.  
Late applications and email applications will not be considered.***

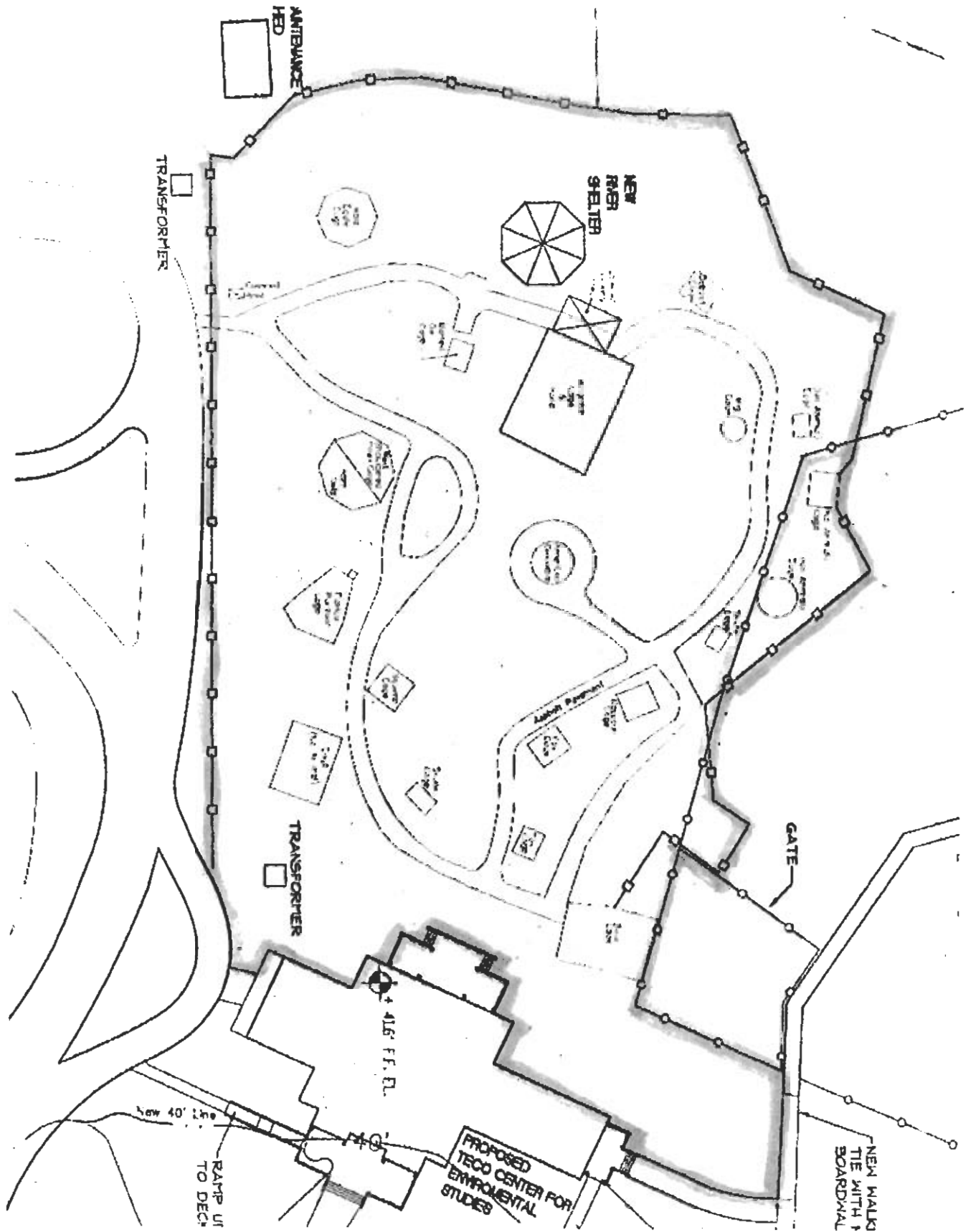
[www.epchc.org](http://www.epchc.org)

E-Mail: [epcinfo@epchc.org](mailto:epcinfo@epchc.org)

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION – EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

## **B. Attachments**





**Key Personnel Bio**

**Karen Y Johnson**, is the On-Site Coordinator/Lead Teacher at Nature's Classroom

13100 Verges Rd., Thonotosassa, FL 33592;  
813-987-6969, Fax: 813-987-6792;  
e-mail: karen.johnson@sdhc.k12.fl.us

*Her qualifications include:*

Degrees: B.S. - Elementary Education MEd - Leadership and Administration

Certifications: K-6, Gifted, and Administration.

Experience:

- 16 years teaching experience within the Hillsborough County School District (Elementary and Middle School levels).
- 7 years as a member of the Nature's Classroom Environmental Studies Center staff (Coordinator, Subject Area Leader, Lead Teacher, B.E.S.T. Practices Master Teacher).
- 13 year instructor of summer programs: Science/Math and Gifted Science Camps for students and Hillsborough River Watershed and Ecology of the Hillsborough River System Workshops for teachers.

Other:

- Master Naturalist, Project WILD and Project WET Facilitator, Hillsborough County Regional Science Fair Scientific Review Committee Chairperson, Teacher Trainer/Facilitator.
- Member: Association of Nature Center Administrators, League of Environmental Educators of Florida, Groundwater Foundation.
- Current and former member of writing teams for grants and curriculum development for the Florida Aquarium, Tampa Electric Co. Manatee Viewing Center and Museum of Science and Industry.
- Recipient of Award of Excellence for Outstanding Achievement In Water Conservation Education from SWFWMD (2003).



**Melody M. Marrs** is the Development Director for the Foundation and is in charge of the Nature's Classroom renovation campaign.

Hillsborough Education Foundation  
2010 E. Hillsborough Avenue, Ste. 212  
Tampa, FL 33610

B-2 cont'd

Phone: 813-231-1943

FAX: 813-231-1905

Email: mmarrs@educationfoundation.com

*Her qualifications include:*

Education: Florida College – 1973

Certifications: CFRE (Certified Fund Raising Executive)  
Non-Profit Management – University of South Florida

Experience:

- Nine years with the Hillsborough Education Foundation
- Owned and operated private construction company for ten years - Precision Paperhangers and Painting

Other

- Serves as Capital Campaign Director for the Nature's Classroom renovation and construction of new facilities.
- Manages both the development and construction related responsibilities for the campaign, including coordination of fundraising program to raise \$3.4 million for the construction projects and contract administration for the construction.
- Responsible for all development activities at the Hillsborough Education Foundation.

- a) **Objectives of this Project - Describe the principal and subordinate environmental objectives of the project. Pinpoint any relevant physical, economic, social, financial, institutional or other problems requiring solution.**

The environmental education program's success has been due to its ability to translate the textbook curriculum into hands-on experiences for children, to help them retain the environmental messages into adulthood. The facilities at Nature's Classroom play a key role in the program's effectiveness. But after years of use, combined with cyclical flooding of the Hillsborough River, the action of termites on the wooden structures and the results of fire, the facilities are no longer able to serve in the capacity necessary to ensure the proper learning takes place. For example, some of the indigenous animals on display have to be moved out of sight during high water because their pens are located too close to the river. Our objective is to renovate and restore and rebuild the Nature's Classroom facilities to facilitate proper instruction. Phase III of the construction plan involves moving the affected animals to newly built habitats located on higher ground. Once the animals have been moved, the 2-3 acre land area they vacate will need to be restored. Each animal pen has concrete pads and fencing that will need to be demolished and cleared away, along with the old pathways. Then, the area will need to be made useable for the environmental education experience, in keeping with the rest of Nature's Classroom. To that end, the plan calls for creation of a series of gardens to occupy the area. One will be a 'butterfly' garden, which will contain woody shrubs and herbaceous plants that provide the perfect environment for development from larvae to adult butterfly. Another will be an 'edible and toxic plants' garden, containing both toxic and edible plants native to Florida. Students will observe these plants prior to the nature hike session, and will be able to identify them if they see them growing wild along the nature trail. And another will be a 'native plants' garden, which will contain other plants native to Florida. The cost of building the new animal habitats and moving the animals is being sought elsewhere. But to restore the land and make it useable for environmental education purposes, we are seeking EPC funding.

- b) **Results and/or Benefits Expected - Identify specific environmental results and/or benefits to be derived from the project. Include all primary and secondary benefits accruing to the grantee, to the pollution served, and in general, to the public and environment.**

To adequately learn the concepts of pollution's toll on plants and wildlife in Florida, and man's effect on its ecosystems, students need to be able see, smell and sometimes touch the plants and animals being studied. Nature's Classroom is an ideal venue for such lessons, and this campaign is crucial to its success. Restoring the land containing the old animal pens with environmentally-focused gardens adds a new element to the curriculum and enhances the entire program. It also ensures that the land is 'reclaimed' to a useable and beautiful purpose in keeping with the natural environment. It is to be expected that students learning about Florida ecosystems in middle school will be better able to make environmentally-friendly decisions when they reach adulthood.

- c) General Project Information - Discuss the criteria that will be used to evaluate the results and successes of the project as well its relationship to other work planned, anticipated or underway.**

The successful completion of these new and renovated facilities and grounds will result in more students being exposed to more hands-on learning activities. The enhanced learning experience will translate into longer retention of environmental concepts, and a keener awareness of the dangers of pollution. Nature's Classroom learning is measured through pre & post testing on the concepts covered during the students' 3-day visit.

### Scope of Work

Restoration of current animal pen area into useable park with educational gardens.

<u>Timeframe</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Est. Cost</u>
Spring, 2006	Bids and contract for landscape artist	N/A
May, 2006	Designated area plotted, reviewed and designed by landscape architect	\$10k
Summer/Fall 2006	Contractor secured for park & gardens area; site work and demolition of old animal pen concrete pads, walkways, fencing, dead tree removal, etc.	\$25k
Fall/Winter 2006/2007	Irrigation system installed; fill work and sod installed	\$24k
Spring/Summer 2007	Landscaping and building of walkways and instructional platforms	\$70k
Fall 2007	Planting of gardens and other landscape engineering	\$40k
Fall 2007	Installation of signage, park benches, and water fountains	\$9k
N/A	Contract administration and construction oversight	\$10k
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$188k</b>

## BUDGET CATEGORIES

	PRF Funds	Federal	Applicant	State	Other
<b>a. Personnel</b>					
<b>1. Campaign Dir.</b>	\$ 6,000				
<b>2.</b>					
<b>b. Administrative</b>	*				**
<b>c. Materials</b>	*				**
<b>d. Contractual</b>	\$182,000				**
<b>e. Construction</b>	*				\$2,810,599
<b>f. Other</b>	*				\$ 411,823
<b>g. Total Direct Charges (Sum of a. to f.)</b>	\$ 188,000				\$3,222,422
*included in 'contractual' figure		**included in 'construction' figure			