



## **Excellence in Water Quality - Thurston Nature Center**

*Accepting the award: Beth Caldwell and Jim Vallem. Other key members of the Thurston Nature Center present include: Frank Commiskey, Madelaine Conboy, Sandy and Jim Breck*

The Thurston Nature Center is a 20 acre preserve owned by the Ann Arbor Public Schools and OHAC pool in north east Ann Arbor. The preserve is dedicated to educating and providing space to learn about the natural world for those in the school system and the community. The Thurston Nature Center committee originated from a small group of Thurston families, led by Bill Stapp in the 1960s.

- Over the years, the committee has led exemplary work in improving the water quality of the Thurston Pond and the downstream Huron River. A few examples of this work include:
  - building a prairie and oak savannah which helps soak up stormwater and provides wildlife habitat
  - caring for the shoreline by planting and tending to plants that can withstand the variable conditions
  - planting three rain gardens throughout the school property and involving students in building, planting, studying and caring for them
  - removing excess sediment that had built up in the pond, which improves the water quality downstream
  - leading countless nature walks, labeling trees and setting up butterfly surveys – all to encourage people to become more familiar with the natural space in their backyard
  - eliminating phragmites and purple loosestrife around the pond and sowing the areas with native plants
  - rebuilding the stormwater outlet to include a settling pond which can better capture pollutants before they head downstream
- Our office has had the pleasure of working with the Thurston Nature Center on rain garden and water quality education projects since 2014
  - We have co-taught lessons relating to the rain garden in every grade and even held teacher trainings at the Thurston Pond to encourage other schools to pursue similar projects

Please join us in congratulating the Thurston Nature Center for going above-and-beyond in improving water quality, providing educational opportunities and diligently maintaining their preserve for the benefit of the neighborhood.