

Texas Master Naturalist Program Earns Statewide Honors

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SAN ANTONIO – The Texas Master Naturalist Program was honored with the Keep Texas Beautiful Civic Organization Award during that organization’s 50th annual meeting June 12-14 in San Antonio.

A main goal of the conference is a time to “celebrate and recognize the achievements of youth and community leaders, civic groups, businesses and governments,” according to the nonprofit organization’s website. Keep Texas Beautiful is a state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful.

Michelle Haggerty, Texas Master Naturalist Program state coordinator at Kerrville, said the master naturalist program is designed to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach and service for the betterment of natural areas within the state. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department sponsor the program.

“The Texas Master Naturalist Program and Keep Texas Beautiful share similar missions to educate and engage Texans to take responsibility for improving their community environment,” according to the award nomination.

Haggerty said the Texas Master Naturalist program has 48 chapters around the state, which together train up to 800 volunteers annually. The Texas model has been successfully replicated in 29 other states.

“Texas Master Naturalist volunteers demonstrate coalition-building skills to maximize involvement in their respective communities by bringing together individuals and organizations,” she said. “Each chapter identifies a community need or needs and develops partnerships at the local level or extends statewide to tackle such projects as the Adopt a Highway effort, which is well-known to Texas travelers.”

Haggerty said volunteers statewide logged over 400,000 service hours in 2016 alone.



Accepting the Keep Texas Beautiful Civic Organization Award presented to the Texas Master Naturalist Program are left, Michelle Haggerty, state coordinator, Kerrville and Mary Pearl Meuth, assistant coordinator, College Station. (Texas Master Naturalist Program photo by Ashley Steinbach)

“While many of our service projects deal with helping the natural environment, in 2016 we had 450 master naturalist projects related to Keeping Texas Beautiful’s three main focuses: litter prevention, beautification and waste reduction,” Haggerty said. “Volunteers logged 11,000 hours of service directly devoted to these issues.”

Aside from their hands-on efforts, Texas Master Naturalist volunteers educate others in environmental issues by presenting interpretive programs to campers at state parks, schools, workshops, festivals and other special events, according to the nomination narrative. Since its inception some 20 years ago, program volunteers have reached more than 5.4 million people, which translates to roughly 400,000 people through more than 4,000 outreach events each year.

For more information on the Texas Master Naturalist Program, see <https://txmn.org/> .

For more information about the Keep Texas Beautiful organization, see <http://www.ktb.org/about> .

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