

Award: Competitive Rising Star: Toni

Please give a description of the service nominee provided for the organization.

As a committed volunteer of several years, Toni has immersed herself in many aspects of Earth Sangha's work. She is a knowledgeable volunteer leader at our Wild Plant Nursery, where she contributes to everyday tasks while helping other volunteers learn the routine. Toni also frequents our field events, which include invasive plant removals and native species plantings. She enthusiastically encourages and educates new volunteers, particularly students, about the importance of native plants and our local ecology. As an experienced native plant gardener and naturalist, Toni is able to collect native plant seeds for our nursery on her own or as part of group of naturalists. Over the past few months, Toni has used her skills as a professional video editor and videographer to create an informative video about Earth Sangha's work. She conducted interviews with staff and volunteers, which took many hours and required that Toni attend most of the workdays on our busy volunteer schedule.

Who or what (organization, group, or population) was directly impacted by nominee's volunteer service?

Earth Sangha's work relies on involvement from local students. In 2016, we worked directly with about 40 schools in the DC area, including elementary and secondary schools as well as local colleges. Toni is great at working with students of all ages that come to our events, as she is able to show students what to do while explaining the reason behind the work. She is also a real motivator of our large volunteer work force. She sends reminders to a listserv of regular volunteers on a weekly basis, often brings refreshments to workdays, and makes an effort to organize volunteer carpools to Earth Sangha's various field sites. We have over 600 annual volunteers who contribute about 11,000 hours to our restoration projects annually, so Toni's organizational efforts are greatly appreciated.

Please provide a quote from the Executive Director and/or the Volunteer Coordinator about the nominee.

Toni is one of our most versatile and talented helper. She has many professional interests, including photography and video interest. She is also an fierce environmentalist with a sense of humor. She has become our unpaid volunteer supervisor and our unofficial public relations person. She is always in the mode of "what can I do for you?" And she means it and delivers it!

Lisa

In your own words, please tell us why this nominee should receive this award.

Toni's volunteer service is remarkable because she is able to translate her personal reverence for nature into actions that benefit the community as a whole. From native plants to wild animals, Toni's curiosity about the natural world has led her to

diligently pursue many causes. In addition to her work with Earth Sangha, she is certified as a Virginia Master Naturalist, does public outreach about invasive species, and has participated in citizen science. She is passionate about local environmental stewardship and eager to share her knowledge in person or through her photos, videos, and writing. Through her hard work and advocacy for native species, Toni quickly became someone that Earth Sangha depends on to help lead events and educate the public.