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**\*\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\*\***

**Aqua Pennsylvania, Riverbend Environmental Education Center, and Upper Darby School District Collaborate to Bring Environmental STEM Program to Nearly 1,000 Fifth Graders**

Upper Darby, PA [March 22, 2024] – Riverbend Environmental Education Center, in partnership with Aqua Pennsylvania and the Upper Darby School District, is proud to announce a groundbreaking collaboration aimed at enhancing environmental education for nearly 1,000 fifth-grade students in the Upper Darby School District. Aqua's generous donation of \$12,000 will fund the implementation of the "Where Does My Water Come From?" Environmental STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) Program during the Spring of 2024.

Riverbend Environmental Education Center, known for its commitment to connecting people to nature through hands-on STEM education, has been a trusted source for environmental literacy for nearly 50 years. The collaboration with the Upper Darby School District aims to bridge the gap in public knowledge about natural resources and systems, focusing specifically on the vital resource of water.

The "Where Does My Water Come From?" program is designed to connect students to the natural resource of water, providing a deeper understanding of our sources of drinking water and the importance of protecting them. Riverbend worked with Aqua, as the local drinking water provider for schools in Upper Darby, to create custom learning materials, including a map that students will use to trace the path of water from the Crum Creek to their homes. The program builds on Riverbend's successful ecosystem field trip experiences to John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge for fourth graders and extends the learning into fifth grade, **reaching nearly 1,000 students in Upper Darby School District's nine elementary schools.**

"Riverbend's work aligns with Aqua's deep commitment to environmental stewardship, which stems from our mission to protect and provide Earth's most essential resource. We are excited to partner on the 'Where Does My Water Come From?' program by contributing to the education of Upper Darby's fifth graders," said Marc Lucca, President at Aqua Pennsylvania.

The program addresses the challenges faced by K-12 STEM teachers, especially those at Title I schools, who have experienced difficulties in delivering hands-on, inquiry-based lessons during the pandemic.

"Having access to fresh clean water is vital to the survival of all creatures on earth, including humans. Yet we are disconnected from the source so it is easy to forget that how we treat the earth impacts the resources we need. Through this program we hope to make this direct connection for students and their families to their water source and inspire them to become global citizens who take actions to protect the earth's resources." said Suzanne Safran, Education Operations Manager at Riverbend.

The program, developed in collaboration with Upper Darby School District educators and Aqua Pennsylvania, is designed as a "Riverbend on the Road" initiative. Riverbend educators will visit classrooms, providing a personalized and immersive experience for each student. The program covers a range of topics, including the water cycle, water usage, treatment processes, pollution sources, and water conservation. Educators will bring in a live turtle into classrooms to highlight the impacts water plays on our ecosystems.

Krista Seng, Aqua's Community Affairs Lead, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership: "Aqua is proud to support Riverbend and the Upper Darby School District in their efforts to educate the community about the importance of water. **Understanding the journey of water from local waterways to our faucets is crucial for fostering a sense of responsibility towards our environment.**"

Through this collaborative effort, Aqua, Riverbend Environmental Education Center, and Upper Darby School District are **taking a significant step toward environmental education, empowering students to make informed choices and fostering a lifelong connection to the natural world.**

#### About Riverbend Environmental Education Center:

Riverbend Environmental Education Center connects people to nature, equitably advancing environmental literacy through outdoor STEM education and free play in nature while empowering children and adults to take action to conserve Earth's resources. Visit [Riverbendeeec.org](https://riverbendeeec.org) for more information, or follow @riverbendeeec on Facebook or Instagram.

#### About Aqua Pennsylvania:

Aqua Pennsylvania provides water and wastewater service to approximately 1.5 million people in 32 counties throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Visit [AquaWater.com](https://AquaWater.com) for more information or follow @MyAquaWater on [Facebook](https://Facebook) and @MyAquaWater on [X](https://X).

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Left to right: Taylor McClain (Development Manager, Riverbend) Krista Seng (Community Affairs, Aqua), Suzanne Safran (Education Operations Manager), Beth Riches (Supervisor of Science Curriculum, Upper Darby School District), Marc Lucca (President, Aqua Pennsylvania), Erin Reilly (Executive Director, Riverbend Environmental Education Center), Bryan Franey (Riverbend Board Chair; Principle, Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox)