

FROSTBURG EXPRESS

Thursday, May 8, 2003

Frostburg, Maryland

Volume 13 - Issue 3

Former FSU biology head recognized

Melvin Brown presented with Environmental Education Award

FOR THE FROSTBURG EXPRESS

FROSTBURG -- Over the past 53 years, Melvin Brown has watched as the saplings of the Kitzmiller Botanical Garden and Arboretum matured into towering trees and his former students blossomed into stewards of the environment.

He told those gathered at the Appalachian Laboratory recently that he remembered audience member Barbara Johnson from her student days at Beall High School when he was head of the science department, and that he remembered her husband, Richard Johnson, as an outstanding doctor and naturalist.

So when Laboratory Director Louis F. Pitelka presented Brown with the 2003 Richard A. Johnson Environmental Education Award, Brown said he was honored to have received the award established in memory of Dr. Johnson.

The award recognizes local citizens for their outstanding contributions to environmental education and is presented by the Appalachian Laboratory. The lab is a part of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, the state's premier environmental

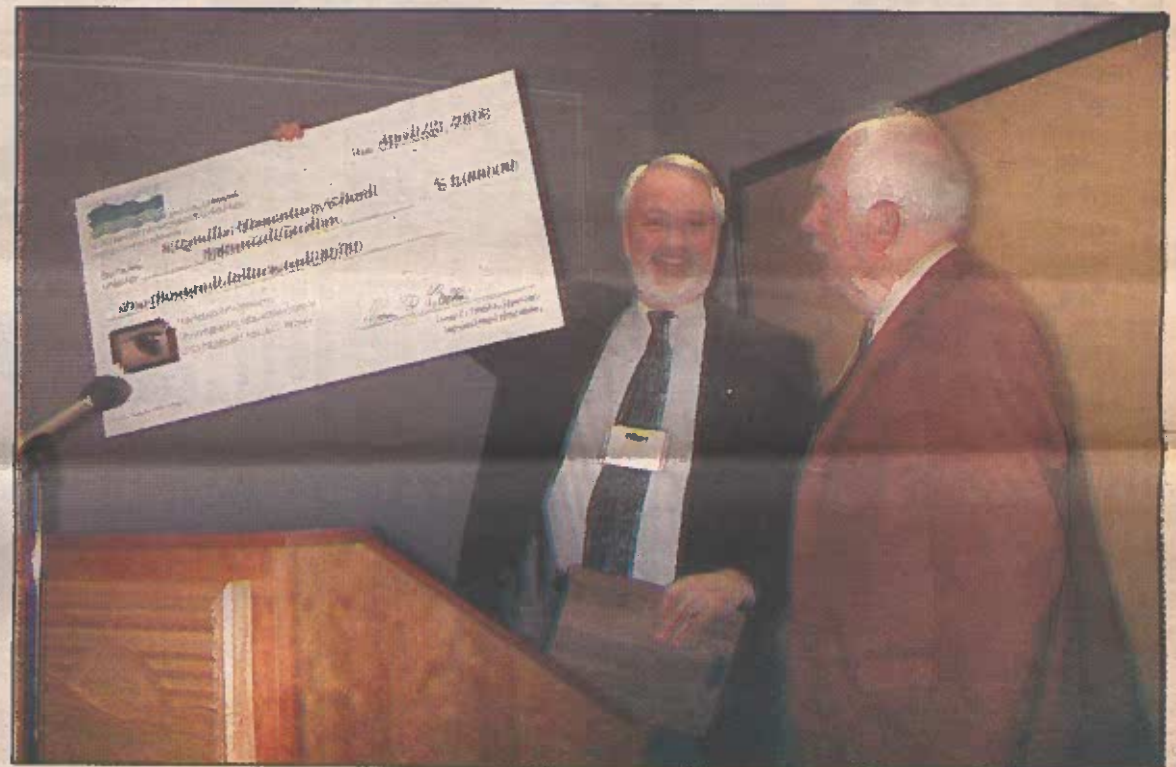
research institute and one of 13 institutions within the University System of Maryland.

As one of the region's leading experts on local flora, Brown has written several scholarly books on the woody and herbaceous plants of Maryland. The publications have not only received academic acclaim but serve as the leading field guides to plants in this region used by conservationists, teachers and environmental enthusiasts, said ceremony speaker, Wayne Bell, director of Washington College's Center for Environment and Society.

But while scientists recognize Brown for his outstanding contributions to the field of science, Bell said, environmental educators honor Brown for his work in communities of western Maryland, particularly his efforts in creating the Kitzmiller Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

"They made a place where there was only once a dream," Bell told the audience of 90 people gathered for the ceremony.

As a new science teacher at Kitzmiller High School in 1945, Brown taught students about the important role of plants in the environment by making use of an eight-acre lot surrounding the school. Students used the



Appalachian Laboratory Director Louis Pitelka presents Melvin Brown with a \$1,000 check for the Kitzmiller Elementary School Botanical Garden. Brown was named the 2003 Richard A. Johnson Environmental Education Award recipient and is credited with starting the Kitzmiller Botanical Garden more than 50 years ago.

arboretum they created to examine local plant species and to introduce new varieties through structured gardens. By bringing students in direct contact with their environment over a seven-year period, his efforts helped pioneer habitat restoration methods, marrying

and botanical education for both the school and residents of Kitzmiller and surrounding communities.

Even after the Kitzmiller High School closed and Brown moved onto Beall High School and then Frostburg State University, he continued to support local arboretums, helping

to create the Larenim Arboretum in Burlington, W.Va., and the James Madison Arboretum in Virginia. He also regularly contributes flora species to the Core Arboretum of West Virginia University. In

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Melvin Brown honored

recent years, he has become active in the revitalization of the Kitzmiller project once more. By concentrating on the educational value of gardens like these, Brown hopes to promote among the public an enhanced appreciation of conservation.

"As we struggle in this state to prepare our young people to combat the environmental challenges ahead we are proud of the rich tradition of environmental education in western Maryland," said UMCES president Donald F. Boesch. "Dr. Brown's outstanding contributions help continue this fruitful legacy."

Brown used his time at the podium to thank the many colleagues, volunteers and students that he has met throughout his long career.

The award ceremony was followed by a reception in the lobby of the Appalachian Laboratory, sponsored by AES Warrior Run.

Past recipients of the Richard Johnson Environmental Education Award include former Times-News columnist Ken Hodgdon (1991), Frostburg State University professor Don Emerson (1991), retired teacher Nan Livingston (1992), retired

teacher Charles Strauss Sr. (1993), former Appalachian Laboratory director Kent Fuller (1996), Department of Natural Resources project manager Bernard Zlomek (2001) and Hickory Environmental Education Center coordinator Joe Winters (2002).

The award provides the winner with \$1,000 to support further environmental education activities. This year's check will go to the Kitzmiller Elementary School Botanical Garden in Brown's name. An endowed fund to support the award has been established at the University of Maryland Foundation and is administered through the Appalachian Laboratory. Contributors to the fund include Allegheny Power, MeadWestvaco and the Mettiki Coal Corp., as well as numerous private citizens and other organizations. The Appalachian Laboratory is an environmental research institution located on Braddock Road in Frostburg.

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