

RESEARCH NEWS

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HHMI Awards \$12 Million for Informal Science Education



Image Title: The Imaginarium, based in Anchorage, produced science exhibits and classroom lessons, which it sent to remote Alaskan villages. It trained local teachers and older students to teach the lessons in elementary schools. Two students who served as teachers in Barrow—the northernmost town in the United States—were Genevieve Rinker (left) and Rebecca Hopson, whose father was an Inupiat Eskimo whaling captain. In this photo, they visit the local shore. - Dan Lamont

Twenty-nine science museums, nature centers, aquariums, zoos and other informal science education centers will receive new grants totaling \$12 million from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The awards support programs to strengthen science literacy and enhance science education. Profiles of three new awardees are featured below.

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villages. It trained local teachers and older students to teach the lessons in elementary schools. Two students who served as teachers in Barrow—the northernmost town in the United States—were Genevieve Rinker (left) and Rebecca Hopson, whose father was an Inupiat Eskimo whaling captain. In this photo, they visit the local shore."

A number of the programs focus on environmental stewardship in inner city, rural and other areas where there are high concentrations of disadvantaged children and families. The Fairchild Tropical Garden in Miami, for example, will receive a \$290,000 grant to develop a program aimed at the local, primarily Caribbean, community. Called Green Treasures, it will involve school children, their teachers and families—including elder family members who emigrated from the Caribbean—in hands-on study of the scientific, economic and cultural importance of plants.

This is the first time that nature centers were invited to apply for the grants. Rock Creek National Park Nature Center, for example, will use a \$500,000 award to develop an educational partnership among the six national parks in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, two schools systems, several nonprofit organizations and a university. Called Bridging the Watershed, the partnership will use the national parks in the Potomac River watershed as learning laboratories for high school students.

This is the fourth round of grants for science education program originating outside the traditional elementary or secondary school setting. Their objectives are:

to strengthen the science literacy of children and their families. to provide resources for better science teaching. to engage families and communities in science education. to stimulate an interest in careers in research and education. to foster collaborations between informal science education centers and other community institutions.

A panel of scientists, educators and museum program specialists reviewed 235 applications. Since 1992, HHMI has awarded 125 grants totaling \$30.6 million to museums and other informal science education centers.

Read brief profiles of three of the new awardees' programs:

UC Paleontology Museum The Imaginarium Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center

A list of new awards follows.

