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Two Virginia Schools Earn Green Ribbon School Awards

Two Virginia schools — Stony Point Elementary in Albemarle County and Magna Vista High School in Henry County — are among the 64 schools nationwide recognized this week by the US Department of Education as Green Ribbon Schools.

The Green Ribbon Schools program recognizes energy-efficient and environmentally friendly schools with programs that promote environmental awareness and literacy, community engagement, and student wellness.

Stony Point Elementary earned Energy Star certification in 2009 and 2011 from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and has reduced its energy usage by 17 percent over the past four years. The school's landscaping consists entirely of plants native to Virginia that do not require irrigation beyond natural rainfall. Stony Point Elementary has a greenhouse and outdoor gardens that are incorporated into lessons and activities across the curriculum. The school participates in the Farm to School program and buys much of its food from local farms.

Magna Vista High has reduced its energy usage by 25 percent since 2009, saving taxpayers nearly \$250,000, and earning the school EPA Energy Star certification in 2012. Magna Vista High's horticulture and agriculture teachers have developed outdoor learning areas — including gardens, landscaping beds and livestock areas — that feature native plants that do not require watering beyond normal rainfall. The school's wildlife-friendly landscaping provides cover and shelter for turkeys, groundhogs, deer and other native species. Magna Vista High partners with the Dan River Basin Association to raise and release native trout. The school also purchases much of its produce from local growers.

The Green Ribbon School program was created in 2011. States may nominate up to four schools for the award and the US Department of Education announces the winning schools on Earth Day. Winning schools receive a green display banner and are invited to send a delegation to Washington, D.C. in June to attend a recognition ceremony.

Fishburn Park Elementary in Roanoke and The Gereau Center for Applied Technology and Career Exploration in Franklin County were recognized as Green Ribbon Schools in 2012.

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