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## JHS student environmentalists honored


By Jeff Alexander Senior Writer

February 22, 2004

The presentation brought tears to Jackie Baker's eyes.

"I can't help it," said the president of the parent booster club of the Jupiter High School Environmental Research and Field Studies Academy. "And especially when the School Board is thinking about making cuts in programs like this."

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U.S. Department of the Interior Assistant Secretary Rebecca Watson awarded the magnet program with a plaque and T-shirts, commemorating the academy's volunteer activities — more than 3,000 hours since 1997 — at the Bureau of Land Management-maintained land at U.S. 1 and State Road 707.

The volunteerism was through the national Take Pride in America initiative.

"I know that you've cleaned up trash, planted mangroves," Watson said. "You've left a legacy for your children and for their children."

In 1996, the bureau acquired what had been U. S. Coast Guard land on both sides of State Road 707 east of U.S. 1, except for 16 acres on the north side that has been set aside for defense use and land near the lighthouse. The northern area, the 54-acre Jupiter Inlet Natural Area, is in Tequesta.

The plaque was accepted by Neal White, academy coordinator.

"We participate in the National Public Lands Day at the end of September and we use the area as an outdoor classroom," White said.

This is the second time in a year that the environmental academy has been honored. In May 2003, White won the BLM's Making A Difference National Volunteer Award and was subsequently honored in Washington.

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Students have helped BLM in exotic plant removals, general cleanup, planting native species, worked on wetlands construction and conducted tortoise burrow monitoring.

While visiting the high school Friday, Watson also toured the Jupiter Lighthouse Park and the Jupiter Inlet Natural Area before joining academy students in a lunch prepared and served by students in the culinary arts program.

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