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## **Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge Accepts 2016 Molly Krival Friends Group of the Year Award**

ROCHERT, MINN.— The Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota proudly accepted the 2016 Molly Krival Friends Group of the Year Award, sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge Association. The award, named to honor the late Molly Krival – a pioneer in the Refuge Friends Group movement, was presented at a reception at the refuge visitor center.

**“The Friends of Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge was the driving force behind the refuge’s incredible Discovery Center that serves as the hub for refuge environmental education programs, citizen science training, and conservation planning,” said National Wildlife Refuge Association President David Houghton. “The refuge is so very lucky to have such a successful Friends Group helping make wildlife conservation an integrated thread in the fabric of the entire community.”**

The Friends of Tamarac developed from a group focused in on the local refuge to an organization with a broader awareness and greater appreciation of the Refuge System’s mission. The group regularly incorporates Refuge System national priorities, such as migratory birds and monarch butterflies, into local events and outreach strategies.

According to Refuge Manager Neil Powers, “Our Friends have become masters in the art of connecting people with nature. Their efforts have assisted in building lasting partnerships with area schools that have increased participation in environmental education programs to nearly 3,000 students annually.”

The group’s most impressive undertaking so far has been its campaign to build the Tamarac Discovery Center. Friends of Tamarac achieved their ambitious goal through careful planning, which included feasibility studies, recruitment of key board members and strategic fundraising. Upon completion, this \$800,000 environmental education center was donated to the refuge. Friends of Tamarac’s work is paving a path for other Friends groups interested in providing visitor facilities for their local unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Friends of Tamarac is particularly passionate about connecting people and nature. From leading interpretive workshops on the refuge flora and fauna for families to weekly nature explorations for youth through the summer months, this Friends group has been instrumental in expanding the refuge’s ability to provide family-oriented outdoor experiences. Outreach to the

White Earth Reservation community, adjacent to the refuge, includes Tamarac Whispers, a radio show airing on the local tribal station, now in its third year of production by the Friends and refuge staff.

Several Friends of Tamarac board members have participated in national and regional workshops, bringing back with them a contagious enthusiasm for the national mission and a fuller understanding of national issues. They regularly communicate with other Friends groups to share information, and gain insight on membership recruitment and outreach methods.

Friends of Tamarac also provides financial support to the refuge. In the past year, the Friends of Tamarac has worked with the biological staff to win three different habitat improvement grants totaling nearly \$70,000. The group has also funded stipends for interns and regularly provides computers and internet access to interns and volunteers. This has made a tremendous impact on this rural refuge's ability to recruit more volunteers and interns.

For more information about each of the 2016 National Wildlife Refuge System Award recipients, visit: [refugeassociation.org/award-winners](http://refugeassociation.org/award-winners).

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*The National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only independent nonprofit that promotes and protects the world's largest wildlife conservation network: the National Wildlife Refuge System.*

*Learn more at: [refugeassociation.org](http://refugeassociation.org).*