ommunity resources are people, places or

objects located off the primary site that may be used to  
achieve educational objectives. Environmental  
education lends itself quite naturally to community  
oriented teaching. The use of resources within a  
community can greatly enhance and expand the school  
curriculum. Community resources can help teachers  
teach more effectively by providing motivation to  
students, helping students achieve learning objectives  
and exposing students to positive role models and `real  
life' situations.

Community resources can provide the

motivation some students need to see the connection  
between the classroom and the "real world". Involving  
students in the community gives them exposure to a  
stimulating learning environment and to different  
people and perspectives; and provides students a  
greater sense of purpose.

Often community -based activities can help

students fulfill desired learning outcomes in a manner  
that is more engaging than traditional textbook  
assignments. For instance, a middle school science  
curriculum may include these learning objectives:  
"Develop an understanding of the recycling process",  
"Distinguish between number one and number two  
plastics", and "Read and construct a bar graph". In a  
carefully planned field trip to a recycling plant,  
students can gain relevant first-hand experience with  
those concepts and processes.

The use of community resources can further

the goals of environmental education by preparing  
students for the real world and helping students to  
become "world class" citizens. The community is an  
extension of the school. Since all environmental  
problems occur in someone's community, it seems  
logical for students to try to solve local issues. The  
teacher can facilitate this process by choosing  
manageable initial projects with a high chance of  
success. In turn, students will begin to see themselves  
as problem solvers and will likely continue their  
involvement. As the students work on solutions, they  
will connect with caring local citizens who are affected  
by environmental problems. In so doing, they will

hopefully develop a sense of stewardship and place,  
which will help build the bridge to global  
responsibility.

**Implementing Community Resources**

Community resources in the form of people,

places, or things can be found in all sectors of the  
community and can provide teachers with teaching  
materials (borrowed or donated), project ideas, guest  
speakers, field trips, or community service projects.  
Some organizations hold workshops, which inform  
teachers about various service, financial, equipment, or  
curricular resources that they offer. Every community,  
no matter how large or small, holds cultural, natural,  
human, and technological resources that can be  
utilized by the students and teachers who live there.

Three common ways for educators to use

community resources in environmental education  
include: guest speakers, field trips, and community  
projects. Guest speakers can be anyone from  
environmental professionals to students' family  
members to other community members. Possible field  
trip destinations are zoos, manufacturing plants, farms,  
or other community businesses where students can  
interact with the people who work there. These  
businesses may also serve as sources of internships or  
mentoring experiences for students. Community  
service projects can take many forms, from picking up  
litter to long-term adoption of a natural area.

Learning through community resources can

involve short classroom sessions, one-day field trips, a  
week-long unit, or a year-long project. Lessons can be  
interdisciplinary, or focus in-depth on a particular  
topic. Once educators begin using a variety of  
community resources, it may be best to begin an  
inventory of those resources. An inventory can take the  
form of a notebook, a box of index cards or a computer  
database. Each entry may have the name of the  
resource, the appropriate subject areas, what the  
resource can be used for, contact name, address, and a  
list of restrictions or limitations pertaining to the  
resource. This catalog of community resources allows  
several educators to share their ideas and experiences  
with others in their school.