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Plainville schools receive arts education honor

Schools share award with GE

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PLAINVILLE — At the Wednesday Business After Hours event, sponsored by the Plainville Chamber of Commerce, the Plainville Community Schools and General Electric were officially cited as recipients of the Connecticut Quality Improvement Award 2002 Gold Innovation Prize.

The award, shared with The Bushnell, recognizes the town's school system and GE for their efforts in expanding the arts-in-education PARTNERS program.

The Bushnell's PARTNERS (Partners in Arts and Education Revitalizing Schools), is a program that aims to strengthen student learning in the area of language arts, literacy and intercultural competencies.

In existence since 1993, the program currently serves nine schools in the Hartford area. In 1996, in collaboration with GE Industrial Systems and the GE Fund, the program expanded from a pilot to a district-wide program in the Plainville Community Schools, where it continues to serve students at each elementary, middle and high school in the town.

"We have been thrilled to be partners in this effort," said Anne Witkavitch, manager of Communications and Public Affairs at GE Industrial Systems in Plainville. "Over the

years, GE has supported the Bushnell partnership in Plainville with two grants. The Bushnell PARTNERS program is an inspiration to all involved."

The Bushnell program allows Plainville students access to local artistic resources and helps teachers integrate the arts into the curriculum. Students attend arts performances in the schools and at the Bushnell Children's Theater. In the classroom, visiting artists use books as the inspiration for a variety of art and writing projects. This past year, for example, second graders at the Wheeler Elementary School read Japanese stories, while first graders created finger puppets of African animals based on images from African folk tales.

Based on the program development in Plainville, The Bushnell has additionally expanded PARTNERS activities to 14 Greater Hartford districts and 32 schools serving over 6,000 children. The 2001-2002 school year will also mark the expansion of PARTNERS into the Torrington school district.

The Quality Improvement Award will be presented on Thursday, Oct. 17, at the Southbury Hilton Hotel during the 15th Annual Conference on Quality & Innovation.

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