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**Cleaning for health: custodians honored for improving school environment**  
*Custodians receive first ever C.L.E.A.N. Award from SDA, NEA, CDC*

WASHINGTON—The critical role that custodians play in improving school health through cleaning is now in the spotlight.

Custodians from five schools across the country are being recognized with the first ever National C.L.E.A.N.® Award from The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA), the National Education Association Health Information Network (NEA HIN) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The top recipient, Pat Nicholson of Washington State’s Brownsville Elementary School, is receiving a prize package that includes a \$5,000 cash award, products and supplies for his school, and a school celebration on National C.L.E.A.N. Day.

C.L.E.A.N.—Custodial Leaders for Environmental Advocacy Nationwide—recognizes the contributions that custodians make to public health in their schools, communities and their profession.

“Custodians are critical partners in creating healthy, clean and safe schools for our students,” said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. “They take so much pride in their work and know that what they do every day fosters an environment where students can learn more effectively.”

Applicants for the C.L.E.A.N. Award provided information on their worksite, cleaning responsibilities, how they have demonstrated leadership for school cleanliness achievements, evidence of collaboration and how their work has enhanced the image of the custodian. Applications were evaluated on originality, creativity, ability to sustain results, evidence of teamwork and program impact.

**“Cleaning for Health”**

“The greatest challenge that I see for school custodians today is to make the paradigm shift from cleaning for appearance to cleaning for health,” said Pat Nicholson, the top award recipient. “Custodians that effectively clean for health create and maintain clean schools, healthier students, and higher rates of student achievement. Custodians are vital partners in successful public schools.”

(more)

“These professionals work every day to properly and safely use cleaning products that help keep our schools healthy,” said Nancy Bock, SDA Vice President of Education. “Their passion and commitment to improving their school environment—for students, teachers and all of their colleagues—showcase how important they are to communities around the nation.”

At Brownsville Elementary School in Bremerton, Wash., Pat Nicholson wrote much of the custodial training material for the local school district. His “cleaning for health” practices contributed to lower absentee rates at Brownsville than at neighboring schools, especially during flu season.

The other award honorees put forth great ideas in their schools as well.

### **Custodians: Making Hygiene a Priority**

Briana Rivera at Saks Elementary School (Anniston, Ala.) presents a “clean classroom certificate” to the teacher and students who keep their classroom the neatest. At Round Top Elementary School (Blythewood, S.C.), Felicia Palmer created a Golden Spatula Award to recognize classes that keep their cafeteria table and surrounding areas clean.

Emmons Elementary School (Mishawaka, Ind.) Rick Johnson developed a Custodial Cadet Program, which is a voluntary apprentice program that provides students with daily practical cleaning experience. Rick also started the school’s recycling program.

At Hanover-Horton Middle/High School (Horton, Mich.), the team of Cindy Fisher, Angela Guisinger and John Smith use innovative solutions to involve students in maintaining clean surroundings, teaching them responsibility and instilling a sense of pride in their own school. The previous cleaning program was completely restructured to emphasize cleanliness and sanitization rather than merely focusing on the appearance of classrooms.

You can read more details about the custodians’ innovative cleaning efforts on NEA HIN’s website, at [www.neahin.org/cleanaward.html](http://www.neahin.org/cleanaward.html).

C.L.E.A.N. Award runners-up received a \$2,000 cash award and, like top recipient Pat Nicholson, an all expense paid trip to NEA’s National Education Support Professionals Conference in Orlando, Florida.

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*The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.*