June 8, 2011

To Whom it May Concern:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter in support of the proposed grant funding for “Earth Voices,” Carien Quiroga’s artist in residence program. This meaningful opportunity will support and enrich Atholton Elementary’s fourth and fifth grade curriculum while allowing for integration of the arts in support of Atholton’s Maryland Green School status.

For the past four school years, Athoton Elementary School has experienced a transformation. We began our quest to become a certified Maryland Green School in the fall of 2007. In order to achieve this goal, students, staff, and the Atholton community have worked together to master and maintain a rather rigorous set of environmental objectives. From teaching our students through environmental issue instruction, to keeping schoolwide best management practices, raising trout, or planting a native habitat garden, these are just a few of the activities in which our school has been involved over the past several years. We believe that understanding the impact one has on the Earth, gaining an appreciation for our natural surroundings, and making an effort to create positive change are non-negotiables for our student learning expectations.

The goals of the proposed artist in residence, Carien Quirogo, through her “Earth Voices” residency program are an exact match to those objectives involved in maintaining our Green School. Just last week, Atholton students, staff, family volunteers and community business partners worked together to construct an amphitheater-style outdoor classroom in the wooded strip along our school. Our students are already reaping the benefits of our outdoor space, which also leads straight down to a stream whose waters eventually flow to the Chesapeake Bay. Students finally have immediate access to the wonders, and threats, of our watershed and to the exact concepts students will experience, using a whole different creative approach, through the Earth Voices residency.

In becoming a MD Green School, our goal is to allow our students, their families, as well as the community, the best chance for understanding our local, regional and global environmental impact. If we can ensure this, we are fostering the chance that our students will become future environmental stewards and problem-solvers. Multiple intelligences suggest that learners respond to instruction through different modalities. Please consider grant funding for Atholton for our chance to reach our learners through a multidimensional creative approach, supporting and enhancing our efforts and instruction as a Maryland Green School.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Young

GT Resource Teacher

Green School Coordinator