



Walker Valley REFLECTIONS

The newsletter of Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont • Winter 2003/04



Memories Surround Me

*Trees,
Rivers,
Mountains,
Memories surround me.*


*Falling leaves, growing trees.
Red, orange, yellow, brown.
Memories surround me.*

*Strong it rushes,
Long it flows.
Soft cool water,
Memories surround me.*

*Tall they stand,
Their greatness shows.
Memories surround me.*

*Love, laugh, live, learn.
Take nothing but memories,
Leave nothing but footprints.
These memories will surround me forever.*

Marianna C.
Age 10
Sycamore School



The Tremont Staff thanks you for the great memories of this year, wishes you a holiday season full of joy and wonder, and sends you our hopes that some of your memories in the coming year will be made in Great Smoky Mountains National Park!

From the Executive Director

A Huge Thanks

Upon returning from a day in the woods with a group of enthusiastic students, Teacher Naturalist **Jaimie Matzko** shared with me the following exchange that she had with her wide-eyed explorers. As Jaimie wrapped up the day's lessons one of them asked, "If we put everything that we learned today in a book, how thick do you think it would be?" Jaimie turned the question back on the group, "What do all of you think? How big would such a book be?" After a short discussion all of the kids agreed, "It would be HUGE!"

The amount that we can learn from these mountains truly is huge. As we approach the end of 2003 I must say that this year's accomplishments, lessons, forward progress and growth at Tremont have been HUGE as well. In this issue **Katie Farmer** reflects on a year at Tremont through the perspective of the river that flows through our campus. There has certainly been a lot of water pass beneath our bridge both literally and figuratively in 2003.

The job of *connecting people and nature* is what we are about. While that job is rewarding, it requires a great deal of hard work and support. As I write this in this season of Thanksgiving I am incredibly thankful to all of you who help us with this important mission.

The list of those I'd like to thank is HUGE as well but includes the following:

The Tremont staff—They are a talented, caring and dedicated family who work tirelessly to share their love and knowledge of this great park with others. You can expect to see great forward progress in the next years from the exceptional team that we have assembled now.

Our board of directors—These volunteers give time, resources and wisdom to help us chart Tremont's direction. Recently we worked with them to develop a strategic plan for the next 5-7 years that includes the following goals:

- Complete the planning process and build a site and facility that is a model of sustainable design, practice, and instruction.

- Implement a sustainable financial strategy
- Continue to develop and implement relevant, cutting-edge, excellent programming
- Implement short-term and long-term strategies to recruit and maintain the highest quality staff.
- Develop and maintain a system to determine the impact of its programs on its participants

Donors and supporters—Many of you have made contributions of dollars, goods, time or talents in the last year. Our number of donors continues to grow and they are helping us realize our dreams and goals. (see a list of recent donors on the last page of this newsletter.)



Our partners—We are part of an extended family that assures that Great Smoky Mountains National Park will be true to its mandate of preserving and protecting this special place for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The National Park staff is tremendously supportive and works closely with us as we play an important role in a larger effort to educate the millions of visitors to GSMNP.

The Friends of the Smokies and **Great Smoky Mountains Association** provide not only financial support but also resources, advice, ideas and so much talent that makes us strong. The Friends completed their pledge of \$250,000 to match the grant from the Alcoa Foundation. That is but one of many ways they have helped us this year. Besides making a financial contribution to support our program each year, the Association provides the inventory and infrastructure for our bookstore and then returns the profits to us. They also assist us with the design and development of our newsletter and other brochures and printed materials.

There are many other partners who help us in specific ways that are too numerous to mention here. They include guest presenters, scientists, educators and artists that help us both conduct and create excellent programs.

Schools, teachers, summer campers, and a variety of other Smokies enthusiasts—You are why we exist and your smiles, comments, letters, and stories around the campfire give us hope that the Smokies is loved and will continue to be protected by the next generation. You have walked its trails, observed its wonders, explored its depths and come to recognize Great Smoky Mountains National Park as something that is yours and deserving of care. You have carried that connection back to your home communities where you are making a difference.

...

As the seasons change so do some of the personalities. **Katie Farmer** has been a delight to have with us for a full year as a Teacher Naturalist but she will soon be moving to Greenville SC to be closer to her fiancée, Tim. They plan to be married in the spring (Tim proposed this fall at sunrise on Chimney-Tops) We will miss Katie but wish them the best.

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Karen White has worked with us as a summer naturalist and part-time throughout the year. She and her husband, park ranger Kent Looney, had a baby girl this November. Congratulations, Karen and Kent.

...

We welcome **Cathy Cook** as the new chief of resource education. Cathy started her park service career on the Blue Ridge Parkway and has worked with education and interpretive programs across the country, most recently in Redwood Park where she was the chief of interpretation and then acting superintendent. Cathy comes with high recommendations and we are already enjoying working with her.

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Thanks to all of you! We look forward to working to continue connecting people and nature in 2004! It will be our 35th year and we plan to celebrate our accomplishments so watch for opportunities to join us as we do so.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Voorhis".

Ken Voorhis,
Executive Director

Dip Your Toe in the Middle Prong

Reflections of a year spent by the river

by Katie Farmer

During a recent all-day hike with a group of fifth graders, one child looks up at me and asks, "What is your favorite thing about living at Tremont?" Hmm. I really have to stop and think because there are so many things to choose from—living inside the National Park; getting paid to

So go dip your toes in the Middle Prong, let the worries of your world wash on down. The old timers say if you sit there awhile today, you'll soon be back no matter where you are bound.

—from the tune
A Home in Walker Valley
by Ken Voorhis

lead hikes and play outside; working with knowledgeable and inspiring naturalists; gazing at the night sky unpolluted by city lights. The list goes on and on. However, I narrowed it down to one answer: the Middle Prong of the Little River. Lou Thompson, a Tremont staff member a few years back, once said that if you dip your toe in the Middle Prong you are bound to return. Well, I dipped my toe, and then took the full plunge. Ever since, the river has become a fascination of mine, a haven, a source of refreshment and rejuvenation and comfort. My favorite lesson to teach at Tremont is Stream Ecology. With every lesson taught (it is taught at least once every week) I am completely amazed and astounded at the life that the river holds in her ever-flowing current and between her smooth, weathered rocks. However, one does not need to be searching in order to make discoveries and be amused. Simply sitting by the water's edge in solitude is enough to entertain and send me into a state of awe.

I have lived by the Middle Prong for

less than a year, yet I have seen her reveal many personalities throughout the seasons.

As I prepare to bid farewell to Tremont, and venture on to the next stage of my life, I reflect on the highlights of the past months of my connection with the river.

Winter

My arrival. Getting used to the constant roar of the river and my excitement of feeling as though I am the only soul around to hear her singing.

The river takes on an emerald-green hue contrasting with the grays and browns of winter. When frost and snow adorn the rhododendron and hemlock on her banks it truly becomes a winter wonderland.

I find that a Belted Kingfisher is a Middle Prong acquaintance, as well. I wonder when I will get to dive into the river just as it does.

Spring

March: Our first stream ecology class scheduled for the year. I am surprised by the abundance and diversity of aquatic macro-invertebrates that we discover. I am also surprised by the children's bravery and enthusiasm as they wade through the icy water.

I jump into the Middle Prong for the very first time in the month of April...brrrrr!

Snow melt, spring rain. The flood of 2003. The river swells overnight, rising to awesome heights and raging with an astonishing strength. As the muddy river water overtakes the road, washing parts of it away, I am reminded of the mighty power of nature.

The sediments eventually settle after the flood, and the river is once again crystal clear. Wildflowers begin to paint her edges with lively pinks, purples, and whites.

Summer

Ninety-degree temperatures, humidity, and ultimate-frisbee games with the new summer interns—there is nothing better

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Willard Clay presenting Tremont Executive Director Ken Voorhis this one-of-a-kind photograph of the Middle Prong of the Little River in autumn (to be auctioned in 2004.)

A One-of-a-Kind Donation

Willard Clay is a world-class photographer who has been conducting photography workshops at Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont since 1989. His photography first appeared in *Arizona Highways* magazine and has since been published in myriad national publications. He has also published a number of large format books on Oregon, California, Illinois, and Texas, and is working on one for Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Will wanted to do something significant for us and has donated this print to be auctioned with proceeds to benefit the Institute. The unique aspect of this donation is not only that Will's photography is highly valued and this image of the river flowing through Tremont is exquisite, but that this is the only copy in existence. Many artists will produce limited editions of their works, but Will has given this as a one of one signed edition.

"Will has always been a great friend to Tremont as well as an exceptional photographer and instructor," says Executive Director Ken Voorhis. "He has often commented on how important he thinks the work we are doing is. This is such a special gift. Will is nationally known for his works, and his landscapes are some of the best I've seen. This photo of the Middle Prong draws you into the river as if you were there wading in its cold waters. The fact that this is the only copy he will create of this image is unprecedented and a great honor."

The print will be auctioned sometime in early fall of 2004 as part of Great Smoky Mountain Institute at Tremont's 35th anniversary. Watch for details of how, when, and where the auction will take place. We expect this one-of-a-kind collectors item to yield a value in the range of five figures.

Middle Prong

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than a refreshing soak in the Middle Prong.

June: Discovery Campers arrive. After passing the swim test they are eligible for swimming in the infamous Tremont swimmin' hole. Some even wake up before breakfast for the Bravery Swim.

During an afternoon of "creeking" (hiking in the river) with some friends, I see my first Hellbender in the wild! The Middle Prong is an excellent habitat for these gigantic salamanders.

Fall

The Middle Prong is the lowest I have ever seen her. Much of her beauty now lies in the reflections of trees with breathtaking fall colors.

Rainfall is now exceeded by leaf-fall it seems. Decaying leaves accumulate providing secret hiding places for an assortment of critters seeking refuge.

A dream come true! I finally see the elusive river otters that folks who spend a lot of time on the Middle Prong claim exist. There were three sleek otters flipping and splashing about, swimming on their backs in their playful way. I bet they love that river as much as I do.

October: The last Stream Ecology lesson.

• • •

Here we are, full circle. Winter is fast approaching. The emerald hue is beginning to glisten, once again. Frost and snow will soon rest along the Middle Prong. Despite the cold, I am beginning to work up the courage to take one last dip in the river before I leave her enchanting waters for good. I can't let the Kingfisher have all the fun.

It will be a difficult thing, leaving this river. But as the saying goes, I have dipped my toe (and much, much more) in the Middle Prong. I will, without a doubt, return again someday.

• • •

Tributaries: (from Tremont to the Townsend Wye) Big Hollow, Honey Cove Branch, Spruce Flats Branch, Bull Branch, Loan Branch, Dorsey Branch, Pigpen Branch, Bear Sign Branch, Grapevine Branch, Barehead Branch, Ashley Branch, joins with West Prong and East Prong to become the Little River.

Destinations: Middle Prong...Little River...Tennessee River...Ohio River...Mississippi River...Gulf of Mexico.

Memoirs of a Tremontster

A day in the life of a teacher-naturalist

by Michael M. Matzko

Each day starts out the same. I wake up to the sound of the Middle Prong, and I look out my window to see if Fodderstack Mountain is still there. Thankfully it is always where I left it the night before.

Honestly, those are two of the only constants I have, for no day here at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute can be considered typical. That is because the work I do here at Tremont is so unique. We are an environmental education center located in a National Park. Being a teacher/naturalist is by no means an easy profession, but it is most surely a rewarding one. I help connect people with nature, and the fall has been the perfect opportunity to do just that.

The uniqueness of being a teacher/naturalist has to begin with having a 500,00+ acre National Park as my classroom. What makes this even more impressive is that the classroom changes with each season. This fall has been a fantastic time to get folks out to see the dynamic foliage. As well as, viewing the heavy preparation made by many of the fauna in readiness for the upcoming winter. I was lucky enough to lead an adult backpacking trip at the peak of the fall colors. It was truly inspiring to see the faces of the participants as they looked out into the valley as the sun was breaking through the persistent fog to show a glimpse of what the foliage had to offer. Another incredible experience I had this fall was getting a chance to take some urban middle school students out for



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some stream ecology. Watching the absolute wonderment in the eyes of those boys as they found out how difficult it is to catch a Blue-ridge two-line

Salamander was truly powerful.

Despite all of the different hats we wear as naturalists, the one thing that I do consider to be typical here at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute is that it is difficult to

set roots with the participants. Just as I start to feel comfortable with a group the next one is set to arrive. Sometimes that can be a little deflating knowing that I have to start all over again, as far as, gaining a rapport with the participants.

Thankfully that feeling fades quite rapidly with the eagerness and enthusiasm of the incoming group to get started.

Being a teacher/naturalist here at Tremont not only means that I am teaching a great deal, but also learning just as much. It doesn't matter whether it is a peer showing

me something they found while out in the forest, or a participant teaching me to be a little more patient. I feel like I have an obligation, to myself and anyone I come into contact with here at the Institute, to be learning as much I can about all I can involving my job. To be quite frank, learning about natural and cultural history has become like second nature. I can't help it. In a hickory nutshell, anyone who visits Tremont or the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, for that matter, is going to learn something new whether they like it or not.

The longer I've been here, and the more I experience, certain realizations occur to me. Working with people in such a wondrous place anything can happen, even magic. The magic is in each and every one of us as we begin to remember what it's like to be out of doors again. The magic is in the eyes of the little boys and girls when they see Spruce-flat Falls for the first time. Honest to goodness magic is even in the "How much further?" question I hear every time I do an all-day hike. Frankly, I get to experience "old things as new again" through each participant as they see, smell, touch, and listen for the first time. I help connect people with nature and that is what I do.



GSMT FILE IMAGE



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CSMA FILE IMAGE

Why the Arts?

We want, and need, to do more.

by Jeremy Lloyd

We've been "doing arts" for a long time here at Tremont, from our annual Environmental Education & the Arts workshop (see accompanying article) to the performing arts that play an active role at Tremont year-round. But we want, and need, to do even more.

I'm excited to report that the arts will soon begin getting a new makeover at Tremont. In July, the Tennessee Arts Commission awarded Tremont a grant for a teacher workshop. With the help of these Arts-In-Education funds, we'll be hosting a curriculum development workshop for teachers and artists in January. This new curriculum will make use of visual, theatrical and literary arts to help better connect Tremont students to the wonder of nature and the Great Smoky Mountains.

But why the arts anyway? Aren't they the first thing one throws overboard when the ship begins to sink in times of tight budgets? And the way the economy has been going lately, wouldn't that be a good thing now?

Indeed, arts funding all over the country has been drastically cut over the past two

decades. But even in good financial times, political winds do not always blow in the arts' favor. Many schools employ art teachers only part-time, giving children only a taste of what the world of arts and their own creative juices might offer them. As a result, many children live arts-impo- verished lives and they don't even know it.

It's common knowledge that school athletics rarely experience the same cold shoulder that the arts do, at least so far as public schools go. Perhaps part of the reason for this is due to the perception that arts are personal while sports are public. Or that the arts are too touchy-feely to be palatable to your average NASCAR dad. Whatever the reason, the differences between sports and arts and what each can do in our lives are worth exploring.

Sports mean a great deal to a great many people. As an avid football fan (go Steelers!), I can easily relate. Yet consider that while a high school star athlete gets to have his or her time in the spotlight, very few teenagers benefit in the long run in a tangible way from their school athletic careers. More than likely they'll become

spectators like everybody else, dreaming of what could have been. Sports are recreation, which we all need. But can they deepen one's sense of self over the course of a lifetime like the arts can?

The arts, in further contrast, are not a spectator sport. If one can play an instrument or draw or craft a story or weave baskets, one possesses a hands-on way of finding enrichment on a daily basis (and there's no waiting for game day or to find others to play.) This enrichment is life-long, and age plays no role. One does not grow old, becoming only a shadow of one's youthful self, and retire from the arts. Rather, age can only benefit the artisan in gathering wisdom and ideas and honing one's skill. Of course, the earlier one begins, the better. But one need never become a full-time professional artist to lead an arts-rich life. Artist networks exist all over America, formed for the purpose of exhibition at local museums, fairs, street festivals, grinnin'-and-pickin' sessions and community theater.

Okay, but what do arts really do for us? What tangible good do they accomplish?

To the die-hard pragmatists in our society, no explanation will ever prove satisfactory in trying to answer these questions. Something as intangible as creativity is by its very nature elusive. Yet the arts do accomplish a high degree of tangible good, most

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Waxing Poetic

The Sycamore School in Indianapolis experiences Tremont

compiled by Adam Barnes



Tremont has always considered itself one very large, very happy family. We have many schools and many teachers that are considered true friends of Walker Valley. One such group is the Sycamore School from Indianapolis, Indiana. For countless years now, a very dedicated group of teachers has made the annual fall trip to Tremont an important part of the school year for Sycamore students and Tremont staff alike. The following is a collection of poetry that this year's 5th grade class wrote during their experience here in these Great Smoky Mountains....



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The Senses of the Forest

Nick B.

Age 11

As you enter a forest, what do you hear? I hear the sounds of birds chirping and the sounds of a spring bubbling. As you enter a forest, what do you see? I see the sudden flash of red as a fox runs. As you enter a forest, what do you feel? I feel the sudden tranquility and harmony of the forest. As you enter the forest, what do you taste? I taste the fresh clean mountain air like water freshly bubbled up from the earth with mint mixed in. I taste the freedom & tranquility of the mountains.

I Sense the Smoky Mountains

Monica P.

Age 11

I sense the Smoky Mountains.
I feel the hardships of making this a national park.
I taste the leaves of a hemlock tree.
I see the tree thicked mountains.
I smell the fresh natural air.
I hear the trickling stream and a fresh breeze.
I know I had a natural experience.
I sense the Smoky Mountains.



Smoky River

Kristen L.

Age 11

Deep
Down
Inside this River
You Can See
Its Beauty
Its Power
Its Uniqueness

Its Secrets
Have Been Kept
And Unless You Look
You Can't See

The Middle Prong

Sam D.

Age 10

The roaring river flows away.
It quickly flows away.
Its rapids rage to another land.
It rapidly flows beneath a moon of gray.
It quickly flows away.
It carries the water to another land.
It rapidly flows beneath a moon of gray.
The Middle Prong swiftly flies to another land.
It rapidly flows beneath a moon of gray.
Its rapids rage to another land.
This river is a pillar of an ecosystem.
This river flows away.

The Quilt of the Smokies

Millie C.

Age 10

A shadow of gray velvet draped over a mountain
On top of a red, yellow, and orange patchwork quilt
Tall and graceful
Casting a shadow of magnificent on the valley below
A rushing river of water
A gift of the Smokies
Only a stitch
In the Smokies quilt of life
As the quilt goes on
Parts are added
And parts are lost
Each loss causes a sadness
Each gain as valuable as the next
As intricate as anything
A master seamstress could make
It goes on forever
In the Smokies quilt of life

Sam W.

Age 11

I take the leave of my life
My foot steps carry me
Like clouds upon the wind
I go in search of adventure



Waterfall

Ben H.

Age 11

Waterfall
Swift Cascading
Falling Swirling Changing
Sparkling As It Falls
Refreshing

Smoky Mountain Park Poem

Matt S.

Age 11

The turtles, rabbits, bears, bees, and all the birds
that fly in the trees.
Newts, frogs, and salamanders too all live here in
a park for me and you
Here they crawl, hop, walk, and fly as if no one is
there.
Trees taller than houses grow commonly here
and the only tree that's my size are the saplings.
When I walk I don't talk I just listen and watch the
ever playing movie in the park for me and you.

The Old Smokies

Patrick R.

Age 11

The Smokies are beautiful yet
tempting
Tempting to climb and play
and have fun
But the true meaning of the
Smokies is their beauty
The Smokies are beautiful in
their own way
They vary from other moun-
tains
As I write this poem I sit, I
wait, I listen, and I watch

I listen to the sounds of birds
and the wind whistling through
the trees
I watch the colored leaves fall
from the trees
I feel fall all around me as I sit
by the river
As I walk the leaves crunch
beneath my feet
I think
I think about the care God
put into these mountains
The memories I'll bring back
I can't describe
The Old Smokies

From the Science Room...

Citizen Science Forum brings leaders from across the nation to Tremont to share ideas

by Michelle Prysby, Citizen Science Director

In November, twenty-three leaders from environmental education and science learning centers gathered at Tremont to do some trailblazing. We weren't out on the trails of the Smokies, but indoors, putting our minds together. Tremont hosted the first-ever forum on citizen science specifically for education centers like us. Our goals were to share best practices for involving our program participants in real scientific research, to create a network of centers doing citizen science, and to initiate discussions among all of us so that we may strengthen and improve the ways we share science with citizens.

The forum kicked off with a keynote address and field session by Susan Morse, founder and director of Keeping Track, an organization that trains people to monitor wildlife populations in their communities by searching for animal tracks and signs in a systematic, scientific way. Keeping Track embodies many of the assets of citizen science as a tool for both education and research. Its participants are able to contribute data that no one else can—they are out four times per year, in each season, walking the same transects through the woods, watching for tracks, scat, claw marks on trees, signs of scent-marking, and other subtle signs of wildlife that require intense observation. Finding these signs and knowing that they have a population of bobcat, or otter, or bear in their community empowers citizens to become advocates for the protection of open lands and forest where they live.

After feeling inspired by Susan and the great potential for citizen science, we got down to business—two days of roundtable discussions and presentations on the citizen science programs at our various centers. Our roundtables were great times to clarify our thoughts, bring up challenges and problems, and swap ideas for solutions. Some of the topics discussed included how to balance research and education goals in citizen science, enhancing communication between students and scien-

tists, evaluating the success of citizen science programs, and how to include citizen science in wilderness trips.

Out of our discussions, we drew “best practices” for using citizen science in environmental education. Everyone left at the end of the weekend with a little homework, as we are compiling our thoughts into a guide to best practices that will be available to the broader environmental education and citizen science communities.

Of course, we were at Tremont, so we had some fun along with our work. A few memorable moments participants mentioned at the end of the weekend included Susan Morse howling like a wolf during her slide presentation, a mom-and-daughter team from Indiana singing songs to promote citizen science in the Great Lakes, catching a giant black-bellied salamander in the Dorsey Branch, and (my favorite comment) “seeing the light bulbs come on” as the forum participants discovered new ideas for citizen science that they can bring home and share with their staff.

Citizen science activities in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, including those at Tremont, are known and respected by others in our field. It was exciting to host this forum, to share our successes and challenges, and, together with the other centers, to blaze the way for more educators and scientists to follow and join us.

To learn more about our discussions at the Citizen Science Forum or to join our informal group of environmental education centers incorporating citizen science into our programming, contact Michelle Prysby, michelle@gsmnit.org.

Along with the “Guide to Best Practices” we will be producing, we are starting a listserv to facilitate on-going conversations on how citizen science fits into environmental and science education. Another Citizen Science Forum at another center is also a possibility for the future.

Citizen Science Forum Participating Institutions

Appalachian Highlands Science

Learning Center

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, NC

Appalachian Mountain Club

Gorham, NH

Ashuelot Valley Environmental Observatory

Westmoreland, NH

Audubon New York

Albany, NY

Aullwood Audubon Center and Farm

Dayton, OH

College of Charleston

Charleston, SC

Cornell University, Dept. of Horticulture

Ithaca, NY

Headlands Institute

Golden Gate National Recreation Area, CA

Great Lakes Research and Education Center

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, IN

Mammoth Cave National Park

Mammoth, KY

North Carolina Aquarium. Fort Fisher

Kure Beach, North Carolina

Olympic Park Institute

Olympic National Park, WA

The Outdoor Campus

Sioux Falls, SD

Richardson Wildlife Sanctuary

Chesterton, IN

Roger Tory Peterson Institute

Jamestown, NY

Mediterranean Coast Network

Learning Center

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, CA

Teton Science School

Grand Teton National Park, WY

Urban Ecology Center

Milwaukee, WI

Wilderness Technology Alliance

Silver Spring, MD

Teacher's Corner

by Jaimie Matzko

At the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, we believe that environmental education is so important that it should not only be experienced here at the Institute, but also in the classroom or at home! Many of the teachers that visit us at Tremont participate in cooperative teaching. Our philosophy is that providing the teachers with the opportunity of leading a group outdoors can equip them to begin feeling comfortable there and can inspire them to return to their own classrooms refreshed and excited about environmental education. If you are a teacher or parent that has been to Tremont and are looking for some ideas to introduce or reinforce concepts that are in our lessons, here is a great activity! This activity focuses on forest ecosystems and includes similar concepts as our lessons: Life in the Forest, Forests in Winter, Trees are Tremendous, and Wildlife.

Recipe for a Forest

From: Joseph Bharat Cornell's *Sharing Nature with Children: A Parents' and Teachers' Nature-awareness Guidebook* (This is a great book that is on every environmental educator's book shelf)

Ages: 7 and up

Number of participants: 2 or more

Goals: Students will be able to apply their knowledge of the food cycle, including producers, consumers and decomposers. Students will also learn that an ecosystem includes living and non-living things, such as, the sun, the rocks and soil, the climate, the flora and fauna.

Introduction: Take your group for a walk into a forest or wooded area. Ask students what "ingredients" make the forest. Help them to make connections between these "ingredients". For example, the squirrels make nests from tree leaves or in tree cavities and eat acorns and other

nuts. Why do the oak trees need the squirrels? The squirrels help to plant the acorns when they store them underground for winter. Don't forget to include non-living parts of the ecosystem like rocks, soil, the sun and climate.

Activity: The students will be creating an imaginary forest with their own ingredients. They can work alone or in groups. You could even create a large mural for the classroom! They will create their own animals and plants that have special adaptations for survival in their forest ecosystem. Remind them that their ecosystem should include living and non-living "ingredients." Have the group share their forests and show the connections that they have created for their imaginary ecosystem.



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Conclusion: Here are some great questions to conclude this activity. Did they create adaptations for their plants and animals to survive? What is their "niche" or role in the ecosystem? What would happen to the food cycle if you remove a plant or animal? Did they include non-living things in their ecosystem? What would happen to their forest if they did not include those non-living things?

From our New School Program Director

by Jennifer Arnold

There are a few constants in Walker Valley. The beauty persists, as do the wonderful experiences of the people, water, and other creatures that pass through. The other constant is the constant change. I have recently returned to Walker Valley that has changed my life significantly. I remember many of you from my first days here at Tremont as a Teacher/Naturalist in 1995-96. Tremont was and is a place that changed me forever. I renewed my curiosities, my drive for new discoveries and my desire to be a catalyst to others experiencing nature, while here at Tremont.

Back in 1997, I moved just three counties north to Greene County, Tennessee and worked with a wonderful organization, Rural Resources, helping to educate children and adults alike about the importance of farms, farmland and preserving our agricultural heritage. I was incredibly lucky to find an organization that was ready to begin a children's educational program on a farm

and looking for someone to develop and direct such a program. I jumped at the chance and spent three wonderful years learning to milk goats and cows and raising more chickens, guineas, goats, turkeys and vegetables than I ever thought I would. During my time with Rural Resources, I also had a chance to see children open up to the knowledge of where their food comes from and the idea that they are much closer to that process than many of our modern advertisers would have us believe.

In the winter of 1999, I felt a call to return to the place I grew up and was given the opportunity to direct an environmental education program in Alabama. The Camp McDowell Environmental Center has been my home until the end of October of this year. McDowell was another wonderful experience, where I continued to meet more extraordinary people who find a passion in sharing their interest, knowledge and excitement about

nature with children.

Now that I am back in my adopted home of East Tennessee and even better, back in the Smokies, I am very excited about helping Tremont continue the strive for excellence that began in 1969 and has been so successful in helping students, teachers and other adults connect to nature.



Looking Ahead

Check out some of the great programs just waiting for you!

Tremont is excited about our upcoming adult workshops and we know you will be too! Visit our Web site at www.gsmi.org for details, course schedules, and upcoming workshops.

Wilderness First Responder Courses

Do you know how to respond to backcountry emergency situations? Anyone interested in the wilderness or in emergency medical training will benefit from this course. Instructors from Roane State Community College will lead the program. The curriculum will meet the Tennessee Dept. of Transportation's standards for First Responder while focusing on the special situations that may develop in the wilderness. Participants will be eligible for national registry and state testing upon completion of this program. Program lasts from Sunday evening to the following Sunday afternoon.

Wilderness First Responder January 18-25, 2004

Cost: \$730. Test fee, lodging, and meals included in cost. There will be an additional fee to purchase textbooks.

Wilderness First Responder Refresher February 13-15, 2004

Cost \$305. Lodging and meals included in cost.

Nature Professional Series: NatureShop

March 12-15, 2004

Designed specifically for professionals teaching natural history in environmental education facilities, nature centers and residential centers,

NatureShop offers an opportunity to learn from our peers. Through a variety of workshops and field trips, and using new planning techniques such as Open Space Technology, we will discover new and exciting ideas to feed the flame of our programs. Workshop lasts from Friday supper to Monday breakfast. Cost: \$165; includes all meals, lodging and program fees.

Spring Photography Workshop

April 16-19, 2004

This is your chance to capture the wonder of sunrise, sunset, wildflowers and lavish landscapes! Nationally recognized nature photographers Bill Lea and David Duhl will lead a workshop emphasizing wildlife, landscape, and macro photography. Bill and David tailor the program to the skill level and interests of each individual participant with plenty of one-on-one instruction. Field sessions and lectures will cover the use of light, composition, and equipment. Program lasts from Friday supper to Monday mid-morning. This workshop fills quickly, so register early! Cost: \$450

Spring Backpacking Trip: Maine-to-Georgia Hike

April 16-18, 2004

Join our guides and experience the beauty of spring in the Great Smoky Mountains firsthand on a three-day backpacking adventure. We provide all the information, food and gear (except sleeping bag) for your excursion. This is a safe, educational, and enjoyable way to learn about backpacking in the

Smokies. Participants must be in good physical condition and be able to hike 5-8 miles a day in rugged, mountainous terrain. Program lasts from Friday morning to Sunday afternoon. Cost: \$205

Mount LeConte Hikes

April 17-19, 2004 and October 16 - 18, 2004 High Elevation Ecology

August 14-16, 2004 All Taxa Biodiversity Challenge

Head to the top of the Smokies and spend the night at Le Conte Lodge, the highest elevation lodge in the eastern United States. Along the way our educational staff will share their knowledge of natural history, high elevation ecology, and science. Cost: \$335 (includes all meals, lodging, transportation, and instruction). Full amount is required for registration.

Spring Awakenings Naturalist Weekend

April 23-25, 2004

Spend the weekend focusing on your topic of choice Cost: \$190/participant (includes meals, lodging and instruction) Choose from four areas of focus:

- Wildflower Wonders
- Elkmont: History of a community
- Butterflies and Moths
- Salamanders of the Smokies

Visit our Web site for more details about topics and tentative schedules.

Environmental Education, the Arts, and YOU

By the time you read this, it will be only a few short weeks before our annual Environmental Education & the Arts workshop commences on February 20-22, 2004. This inspirational and exciting early spring weekend is dedicated to using the arts to teach environmental education.

Our featured presenter is award-winning singer and songwriter John McCutcheon. A gifted multi-instrumentalist, John has recorded over twenty albums and earned five Grammy nominations. The author of several children's books, he has appeared on National Public Radio to talk with children about songwriting. In the past year he's performed at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and National Storytelling Festival. A native of Wisconsin, John has apprenticed with many legendary figures of Appalachian music, and now calls Virginia home.

The weekend will begin with a Friday evening concert by John McCutcheon at the Palace Theater in Maryville, Tennessee. He

will also host a song-writing workshop the next morning for workshop participants only. Saturday is full of concurrent, hands-on sessions that explore many aspects and methods of creativity. Just a few of this year's offerings include "Traditional Appalachian Dancing" with Deborah Denenfeld, "Nature Poetry" with Bobbie Pell, "Story Totems" with Carmen Gonzalez, and "Kaleidoscope Magic" with Bob Grimaldi.

Our annual Open Mic Night will take place Saturday evening in a relaxed coffee-shop setting, giving everyone an opportunity to share their talent with others. Sunday activities are traditionally reserved for spontaneous ideas that emerge over the course of the weekend from the collective creative juices of the group.

Program lasts from Friday supper through Sunday lunch. Cost: \$175. One hour of graduate credit is available for an additional fee.

This workshop is sure to fill, so sign up today! Call 865-338-6709.

Why the Arts?

Continued from page 5

notably during children's school years.

The College Entrance Examination Board found that SAT takers with more than four years of study in the arts scored 57 points higher on the verbal portions of the test and 43 points higher on the math portion than students with one-half year or less of study in the arts. More generally, the UCLA Imagination Project found better academic scores among students with high involvement in the arts – even among students belonging to the lowest socioeconomic quartile. (See www.AmericansForTheArts.org for more.)

Students don't stay at Tremont for four years. But it's very reasonable to believe that the arts can improve the learning of those who might be exposed to more arts during their time here. Teachers report that their students do indeed learn as a result of a five-day stay at Tremont, often acquiring new social skills and greater awareness of the environment. If the arts can be invested

into students' Tremont experience even more than it already is, then in the future teachers can likely expect even greater returns. The No Child Left Behind Act has placed higher expectations on teachers to show that their students are doing as well as they should. If the arts can improve children's overall learning capacity, then a greater arts presence at Tremont can even be seen as helping to do our part in leaving no child behind.

So the arts leaves a deep, long-lasting impact on children's lives. But will environmental education infused with the arts do the same?

Tremont naturalists regularly wonder if the children we teach will internalize what is perhaps the most important aspect of our message. Will they, having come to recognize the specialness of the Smokies also come to recognize the specialness of all places? Will they help conserve these places for future generations?

The answer, we hope, is Yes. Tremont's motto is "connecting people and nature."

Increasing the presence of the arts at Tremont is yet one more way of doing this. Science-based teaching reaches some children in vital ways, but not all. The same is true with the arts. We believe strongly that the more tools we have available to us to teach our message, the better.

With this in mind, I can think of no better means to give children who come to Tremont an ongoing, life-long connection with nature than by using the arts as a tool. If the arts deepen their sense of self here at Tremont while at the same time helping them feel more deeply their connection to nature, we will have fulfilled our mission perhaps even better than we did before.

We have big dreams for the arts at Tremont. But we're going to need help making it a reality. We continue to seek individuals and institutions willing to help fund such an endeavor. With this in mind, I hope that you too look forward to seeing a greater arts presence here at Tremont.

Donations

From 8/7/03 to 11/20/03

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Alcoa Foundation
Great Smoky Mountains Assoc.
The Friends of the Smokies
Knoxville Utility Board

SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Ola Abbott-Brackin Reunion
Berrien County Math & Science Center
Tremont People Reunion
Samuel E. Tinsley

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENDOWMENT FUND

From 8/7/03 to 11/20/03
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VOLUNTEER WORK DAY PARTICIPANTS

On the weekend before Thanksgiving, we held our annual Tremont Work Day and had a record crowd help us get a tremendous amount of work done. While painting, cleaning, wood-chipping, repairing, clearing, trail building, etc., this crew of staff and volunteers experienced a beautiful day in the Smokies, enjoyed each others' company, and made a huge contribution of their energies and volunteer spirit to Tremont. Thanks to the following volunteers:
Susan Akins
Cheryl Baker
John Barker
Sue Barker
Deanna Brice
Darlene Carroll
Barbara Chagnon
Alan Cheatham
Glenn Claypool
Donna Davis

Becky Harrell
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Carlos Moreno
Adam Ogle
Cody Privett
Tyler Ryan
Girl Scout Troop #376,
Maryville
Michelle Gruetzmacher
and a giggle of Girl Scouts
Haywood Community College
Robert Edwards
Joseph Gardner
Jason Hall
Jay Moose
Tray Norman
Eric Prouty
Tau Beta Pi at UT
Elijah Shekinah

Thanks, friends!



Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont is operated in cooperation with Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

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Jaimie Matzko
Mike Matzko*

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Karen White*

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Program brochures will be mailed early in 2004. Contact our office:

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