Allegheny College Becomes “Creek Central” for a Day

By Jessica Perryman, Allegheny Student

On April 8th, 2005 the Allegheny College Henderson Campus center was filled by over 300 students, environmental professionals, teachers, community members, and Creek Connections staff for the Northwestern Pennsylvania – Southwestern New York Student Research Symposium. Students from fourteen different area schools, with the help of their teachers, created displays and brought them to the symposium to share with all Creek Connections students and Allegheny College.

The symposium was an exciting experience for all with poster displays of student research, oral presentations, opportunities to interact with environmental professionals, and hands-on focus group activities in the afternoon. When asked what was the best aspect of the Symposium students provided a variety of answers. One replied, “Everything,” while another enjoyed “looking at other people’s posters and meeting new -continued on page 2
people,” and a third claimed “I LOVED the town meeting” that was held in the afternoon. Poster displays focused on a variety of topics including “Biochemical Oxygen Demand,” “Edible Plant Game Show,” “History of Water,” “Urban Pollution,” “Can You Identify the Non-point Source of Pollution?” and “Turtles of Pennsylvania.” Displays were creative and colorful. Students spent quality time preparing for the Symposium.

Oral presentations were a success this year. At 10 am Clymer Central School presented “Creek Factor” which was a Creek version of the popular reality TV series Fear Factor. Findley Lake Homeschoolers followed Clymer’s successful presentation with an engaging presentation on “The Bald Eagle.” General McLane revealed their creative juices in a presentation entitled “Career Shadowing Macroinvertebrates” and Maplewood High School discussed how watersheds and stream order can be demonstrated using leaves. The student presentations were accompanied by three presentations by Allegheny College Students. The Meadville Community Energy Project presented “Energy Conservation” while Simon Taxel and Dana Griswold read their personal essays written about Mill Run.

In the afternoon, after a delicious lunch from The Whole Darn Thing sub shop, students had the opportunity to participate in hands-on focus group activities. Activity titles ranged from “Create Your Own Macro” to “Writing on the Banks of a Creek.” Students enjoyed the activities and the opportunity to interact with Allegheny College students and environmental professionals. One student replied to a question about improving the focus group activity with “Make it longer” while another replied with “Nothing. It was great, keep up the good work.”

The Symposium was an opportunity for students that had participated in Creek Connections all school year to reflect on their experiences learning about watersheds. Students enjoyed the year for many reasons. Jenna Bayle of Clymer Central said she enjoyed Creek Connections because “I got to learn more about waterways” and Sarah Strutzman of Maplewood said “I did enjoy learning about them [watersheds] because I got to learn how much they relate to everyday life.” Sarah Maniates of Meadville Middle School thought, “it was interesting. Something I’d never done before. I like working with the college students.”

Creek Connections would like to thank all the students, teachers, Allegheny interns and volunteers, and environmental professionals that took part in both of this year’s Symposia. These events and the entire Creek Connections year were a smashing success thanks to your hard work and dedication. Congratulations on a job well done and make sure you put what you’ve learned through Creek Connections to work in your schools and communities. You have made and can continue to make a positive difference in your watershed!
in Western Pennsylvania and it proved highly successful!

At the symposium, students were able to present their research to other schools in the form of poster and oral presentations. Students were eager to talk about and demonstrate their research, games, and activities ranging from things as scientific as studying the effects of Prozac on snail development to things as creative as board games, paintings, stories and more!

Creek Connections interns chose three of these displays to represent Creek Connections at the Evans City Earth Day Festival; these were, “Past, Present, and Prevention of Floods” from Seneca Valley Intermediate High School, “Spiny Softshell Turtle” and “Water Boatman-Build A Bug” both from Sewickley Academy Middle School.

Hands-on focus group activities were held in the afternoon and, with students hoping for the rain to hold off, were completed in-the-dry at various locations throughout Camp Kon-O-Kwee. Nicole McGinty of West Mifflin Area High School said she learned “clams can be used as wallets” in the focus activity she attended.

Students had several suggestions to make the day even better. Elisha Fleig of Seneca Valley Intermediate High School wants us to “have more live animals.” Roscoe Rhoden suggested “have more games to play.” Everyone had a great creek day. When asked what was the best aspect of the symposium, Angela Stewart of Letsche High School responded with “The whole thing.”
Spring Planting Season for Crawford County Schools

By Wendy Kedzierski, Creek Connections

You know spring has sprung when you see students out planting trees. Each year in both the Spring and Fall, the Crawford County Conservation District teams up with area schools to secure grant funding, find suitable locations, and coordinate planting of thousands of trees. This Spring Creek Connections took part in three projects with five area schools. The first project, at the end of April, was a continuation of the I-79 Living Snow Fence Project with Maplewood and Saegertown High Schools. Mr. Drake and Mr. Greco brought over 120 students to the median strips of I-79 to plant evergreens, hardwoods and shrubs to help slow down the wind and snow that dangerously blows across I-79. You can spot the planting sites by looking for the pink tree shelters used on the hardwood trees. Thanks to all the students, teachers, PennDOT, and environmental organizations who are looking out for the rest of us that travel this corridor.

The second project, in early May, involved planting a riparian buffer along a stream on the Burdick Farm in Beaver Center. This was a two-day project that both Linesville and Conneaut Lake High School took part in. The students did a spectacular job planting trees in the ever changing weather. Each day saw alternating, calm, overcast, sprinkling, snow, hailing, and high winds. The mud was thick and copious, but the students persevered and planted over 1,000 trees.

Finally, the weather broke and Titusville High School had a warm sunny day to plant a riparian buffer along a stream at the Schweitzer Farm near Spartansburg. Mrs. McKellop’s class dug through plentiful rocks to find soil to properly plant the trees that will help protect this watershed.

Thanks again to the students, teachers, landowners, and environmental organizations that lent a hand in these projects. We all benefit from healthier watersheds.
Inlet Run: “Practically Perfect in Everyway”

By Paige Peterson, Conneaut Lake 7th Grade

Packed tight on a bus, armed with a clipboard and pencil. Wondering what adventures may await us in our land, our section of the creek, the apple of our eye. Eagerly dreaming of what the swift waters will hold.

Sometimes we could see our breath, sometimes we ran barefoot. But it was always special, always dear to us. Many a classmate fell with ker-plunks, while still others swam willingly. No matter what the conditions, Inlet Run thrived.

While standing on the shore of our plot, we all began to realize that what we were doing was special. That the simple tests we were doing affected a whole ecosystem, a whole array of unique species. The variety of creatures that made its home where we then stood, that was what helped make it special. Numerous creatures, unpolluted waters, that’s what we were fighting for.

And with each test, each joyful kick-net we pulled in, we were getting one inch closer to winning that fight. Always in healthy ranges, always finding key macroinvertebrates, it dawned on us. Inlet Run was, is, and hopefully always will be, “Practically perfect in everyway.”

“Practically Perfect in Everyway” was derived from Mary Poppins, Walt Disney.
Parting Shot: May 2, 2005, Linesville High School Student huddle against a snow/hail storm during their riparian planting project. What dedicated Creekers!

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