Creek Connections Student and Teacher head to Japan with JAWS Project

After an intense selection process, Sean McKnight, a junior at Hickory High School in Hermitage, has been chosen as one of 30 students from across the nation to participate in a program through the American Youth Leadership Program, specifically the JAWS Project – Japanese American Watershed Stewardship Project. The project is funded by the Department of State.

The program is for students interested in Japan and/or the environment and ecology. Sean is employed as a lab assistant in the macroinvertebrate lab at Wallace & Pancher, Inc. – an environmental engineering firm in Hermitage.

Sean will travel to Washington, D.C. in July for orientation and depart for Japan mid-July returning mid-August.

This is considered to be a year-long commitment, with virtual projects prior to departure, the trip and then upon returning, they are to convey what they learned to their community.

This opportunity came about due to Wendy Kedzierski from Allegheny College (where Sean participated in Creek Connections Creek Camp and many other programs over the years) forwarding the information to Mrs. Bires, who in turn contacted Sean.

You can read more about the project at: http://www.aipt.org/marsh.

By Nancy Bires, Hermitage School District Teacher and Patty Sheehan, Aliquippa Jr/Sr High School Teacher

Patty Sheehan, a teacher at Aliquippa Jr/Sr High School, has been selected to participate in an international exchange program this coming summer. The program, Japan-America Watershed Stewardship Program—JAWS, is funded by the Department of State and will bring together 30 students and 3 teachers chosen from applicants from across the United States.

In July Ms. Sheehan and the others will travel to Japan and spend nearly a month studying the Japanese culture, language and the “whole watershed” approach to ecology. The goal of the program is to expose high school students and educators to U.S. - Japan relations through the lens of the effect of acid deposition on watersheds. Upon her return she will create educational and community service projects for her school which apply the lessons learned in Japan.

Ms. Sheehan learned of the JAWS project as a result of her association with Creek Connections. She expressed her gratitude to Wendy Kedzierski and Laura Branby for their never ending enthusiastic support for the past several years working with Ms. Sheehan’s class testing water quality.
Members of the Hermitage Green Team were asked this fall to help plant the riparian zone for a natural channel design stream restoration project located behind the school. The recent restoration was done upstream from the section that underwent a major stream restoration in 2005. During the 2005 restoration Hermitage students planted 2,000 trees with the help of the S.O.S. (Save our Stream) team. Volunteers from the Shenango River Watchers, High School Green Team, McKeever Environmental Learning Center and DEP assisted the students with the project. The natural channel design restoration project was funded by a DEP Growing Greener Grant. The City of Hermitage conducted the recent stream restoration and invited the Green Team to help with the project. Students worked under the direction of the project manager to rake the soil, spread grass seed and cover the area with straw.

Calling all 9th and 10th graders!

Creek Camp registration is open.

Go to: http://creekconnections.allegheny.edu/creekcamp.html
**Riverview High School Students put on Creek Day for Elementary Students**

*by Andy Fusia, Senior at Riverview School District*

The Creek Connections field trip early this fall was very beneficial not only to the kids from Verner Elementary, but to the juniors and seniors who came with Mrs. Pegher as well. The station my partners and I were in charge of was called the Predator/Prey game. In this game some of the kids were designated as predators, who would try to chase down the rest of the kids, who were the prey. The prey would run to a safe spot to bring back food (poker chips) without being caught by the predators. If they got enough they would survive to the next round, in which there would be more predators. This was a great way for the kids to learn about the food chain, while also blowing off some of the insane amount of the little kid energy they all seem to have. Interacting with the kids, we learned a lot about how to teach and handle kids their age, while keeping everything under control. Much was learned by everyone at Penn Hills park that day, and everyone had fun.

*by Heather Tabachi, Senior at Riverview School District*

The Creek Connection field trip was helpful to us, as well as the younger students. We were able to teach them the knowledge that we learned from our ecology class. I was at the art station during the field trip. Students were able to make a canvas flag with different fish species printed on them. They were also able to make their own journal to write down everything they had learned that day. I believe that the kids got the most out of my station because it was hands-on and a fun way to learn the information. I myself really enjoyed the field trip and would enjoy helping again.

*by Brooke Pegher, Ecology Teacher at Riverview School District*

Having my high school ecology class work all day with the elementary students at Penn Hills park is by far one of the highlights of my year. It is so rewarding to see the older children interact, share and enjoy being outside with a diverse group of younger children. Students from both age groups have the benefit of playing games together, exploring the waterway and surrounding area of a local park and working on craft projects throughout the day. My typically serious students have a chance to show their funny side by playing the predator/prey chase game, my shy students get to help other shy students look under rocks and my artistic students get their hands dirty in paint rather than by wielding a paintbrush. From a teaching standpoint it is an opportunity to see the education and learning from class put to practical and hands-on use. There is nothing more rewarding than to watch a senior teach a fifth grader a concept learned in class, to overhear them reinforce a way of thinking about our surroundings and to watch them pass down the appreciation of our world to the next generation. Creek Connections - and it's related outreach extension lessons - are a gold mine of information and opportunity that I cherish participating in each and every year!
PENNYSYLVANIA TURTLES

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P I A F X O N S U S
K P N T B P I P A M
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blandings box wood
map mud stinkpot
spotted bog softshell
snapping redbellied painted

Go Green!
If you would like to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter instead of a hard copy—email us at creek@allegheny.edu

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