Current in the Creek

Creek Connections is a finalist in the Toyota 100 Cars for Good Program! We need your vote on July 20th. Go to 100carsforgood.com for details and you can sign up for a reminder to vote on our day. We've been without a vehicle for the college students to drive for over a year now. We averaged 14,000 miles a year on our old van and it lasted us 10 years!

Pittsburgh Area Student Research Symposium

YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee was the perfect setting for this year’s Pittsburgh area schools to gather and celebrate the conclusion of a year of Creek Connections! Creek Connections students brought fantastic projects that highlighted their studies throughout the school year. Projects including a representation of the layers through which the shale gas corporations must drill to get at the oil/gas-producing shale(s), a huge gameboard of watershed impacts, and a painted turtle rap highlighted the day.

Participating schools’ projects were showcased alongside display tables of local environmental groups (PA Fish & Boat, PA Game Commission, RiverQuest, ALCOSAN, Beaver County Conservation District, Pittsburgh Regional Center for Science Teachers, the Lewis & Clark Trail, Wildbird Recovery, Citizen Power, and others). Students interacted with Creek Connections students from other schools as well as the environmental professionals. In addition, students attended a Wildbird Recovery presentation focusing on the importance of healthy watersheds to birds.

One of the highlights of the symposium is the time spent involved in a hands-on activity with an Allegheny College student or environmental professional. Each student attended a Focus Group Activity to dig deeper into a specific topic of environmental concern. Students groups were spread throughout the YMCA camp property... some looking for critters in the creek, some building small solar-operated wind turbines, some creating an environmental-themed quilt, others acting out predator-prey relationships in a game, and many, many more!

Thanks to YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee, the environmental professionals who assist us each year, the college student assistants (Creekers), and ALL of the teachers and students who participate in Creek Connections each year! Between your hard work and our funders help, the symposium was a fantastic day!

Above: Students give Gateway Middle School’s watershed board game a try.
Northwest PA & Southwest NY Student Research Symposium

Just one week after the successful symposium at YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee, hundreds more students gathered at Allegheny College for another Student Research Symposium. This symposium included the students and teachers from schools in the northwest part of PA and southwest NY who participate in Creek Connections throughout the year. Centered in the college’s Campus Center, the students eventually spread out to the entire Allegheny College campus!

What a great group of students, teachers and environmental friends! Our environmental friends (US Army Corps of Engineers, Crawford County Conservation District, Pymatuning State Park, PA Sea Grant, Audubon Society, PA Fish & Boat Commission, and many others) arrived first to set up their incredible and interesting displays. Students carried their projects to share with other students/teacher, environmental representatives, the campus community and the Meadville community. Mother Nature has sent rain on symposium day for many years but sent the sun and blue skies this year!

Professor Jim Palmer, director and founder of Creek Connections, kicked off the Student Research Symposium with a hearty thanks to everyone for a job well done! Brian Dalton, newly appointed Vice President for Enrollment and Communications at Allegheny College, welcomed attendees to Allegheny College and encouraged their participation in Creek Connections both as a way to be involved in the environmental health of their community and as an important part of their college application.

After a full day of visiting school and environmental tables, listening to oral presentations, and enjoying the Campus Center... students were separated into small groups to have a hands-on experience somewhere on campus. The activities are the high point of the students’ day and are led by Allegheny College professors, Allegheny College students, and environmental professionals. Quite an opportunity for the visiting students!!

Envirothon

Creek Connections teachers and their students are well represented in this year’s state Envirothon competition! North Allegheny Senior High won the Allegheny County competition (with another NASH team taking 3rd place in the county) and Seneca Valley High School won the Butler County competition (with other SV teams taking 2nd AND 3rd places!). Congratulations teams and teachers and best of luck at the state competition!!! This year’s PA Envirothon competition is at the University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown. Teams representing each of the counties in Pennsylvania will compete for the state title and the opportunity to move on to the national competition. If you’re interested in competing in the Envirothon, locate the team at your school and join it!! P.S. Creek Camp is a great foundation for Envirothon competition... just a hint to any 9th or 10th grader who is interested.
NEW this year is the opportunity for families to explore the wonders of the French Creek watershed, a special area which the Western PA Conservancy has chosen to focus for preservation efforts. Hands-on activities include explorations of aquatic macroinvertebrates, fish, geology, birds, bats, and investigations of a local lake in the watershed... and more! In addition, families enjoy the interaction with other like-minded families, this year including families from Costa Rica! Traditional families are always welcome but families may include any adult (with or without children) and any combination of adults/children (parent-child, grandparent-grandchild/ren, aunt/uncle-niece/nephew, etc.). Families will live in an Allegheny College residence hall with camp personnel and all food is provided. Register for Family Creek Camp at http://creekconnections.allegheny.edu/familycreekcamp.html

Creek Connections Teams up with ALLARM for EPA Education Grant

Creek Connections has formed a relationship with Dickinson College’s ALLARM (Alliance of Aquatic Resource Monitoring) program to add water quality test parameters that indicate the presence of chemicals involved in shale gas drilling. Participating Creek Connections teachers, already performing monthly chemical assessments of a local waterway, are adding creek cross section measurements (the cross section varies as the amount of water in the creek changes) as well as a measurement of conductivity. In addition, they’ll gather creek samples twice a year to send off to a local lab where they will be tested for barium and strontium. Creek Connections staff will accompany the teachers and their students to ensure that the testing is conducted in accordance with ALLARM protocol. The shale gas industry is exploding in western Pennsylvania and is a great teaching and learning moment for all of us!

Above: Teachers learn about the geology behind the shale gas boom.
We at Creek Connections wish to express our sincere appreciation of our teachers, students and many friends for another successful year in the creeks! See you in the fall!