

Naturalist in the Classroom

NEWSLETTER—Issue #4

July 2019

Summer Celebrations!

Dear Teachers, Administrators, Parents, and Friends,

The days are long and school hallways are empty—summer is here! This is a busy time of year in the natural world as monarchs pass through New Hampshire on their long journey, black bear cubs learn from their moms, young birds are fledging, and we are enjoying all of nature's colors as flowers bloom. Amongst this activity, it is important to take a moment to pause and reflect on the successes in the past school year.

At four schools—Belmont Elementary, Gilmanton, Grantham Village, and Inter-Lakes Elementary—students explored ponds and streams, turned over and investigated compost piles, engineered nature-inspired designs, experienced life in winter on snowshoes, imagined life as a pollinator, observed the seasons, and so much more. In the following newsletter, you will find accounts from each of our schools that detail a few of these enriching programs.

Please feel free to reach out to me with stories or pictures you would like to share in upcoming issues of this newsletter, as well as your questions, ideas and suggestions to strengthen our Naturalist in the Classroom program.

Best,

Andie Hession

Andie Hession
School & Community Programs Director
ahession@prescottfarm.org

10TH ANNUAL HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 14th, 10am-3pm

Register now for the

3rd Annual Raise Heck Tug O' War.

Learn more at www.prescottfarm.org.



Name that seed! First graders in Belmont identify seeds we find in the garden and in the forest.



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About Us

Prescott Farm is a nonprofit organization dedicated to environmental education and preservation. We provide year-round environmental education programs for all ages and a place in the Lakes Region community that encourages curiosity, discovery, fun and connection to the natural world.

Founded in 1997 as Prescott Conservancy, Inc., Prescott Farm has helped awaken appreciation for nature and concern for the environment in thousands of program participants. We offer a wide range of programs designed to preserve and pass down knowledge and skills that encourage an understanding of the natural systems that sustain us all and respect for the environment.

During the summer and school vacation weeks, our environmentally-themed WildQuest Camps offer children ages 4-12 the opportunity to explore, learn, and grow in nature for over 15 years.

Since 2015 our nature-based preschool, Fledglings Preschool at Prescott Farm, has offered children ages 3 to 5 the educational foundation they need to succeed in school while awakening in each child a natural curiosity and respect for nature which is at the core of every preschool lesson.

Our Naturalist in the Classroom program supports teachers in local schools and provides place-based, hands-on lessons that incorporate the natural world into satisfy curriculum requirements and help keep children engaged and excited about learning throughout the school year.

www.prescottfarm.org

Inter-Lakes Elementary

The Learning Studio at Inter-Lakes Elementary provided new opportunities for “Jake the Naturalist” to provide hands-on, experiential learning. This new project-based program gives students “voice and choice” in their learning, allowing for mixed-aged groups in different programs by skill set, academic need, and child interest. Options included fitness blocks, 3D printer creations, robotics and coding, knitting, and more.

Jake collaborated with Ms. Beaudoin to provide Compost Club. Over the course of five sessions, ten students learned all about compost and developed a plan to share their new knowledge with their schoolmates. What is compost? How do we compost? Why should we compost? Once they were able to answer all of these questions, Compost Club decided to make posters and write a script for a week of announcements over the intercom. The club also made sure ILES was ready to compost by providing each classroom teacher with a compost bucket. Through the Learning Studio, Compost Club gave students the opportunity to work as a team, practice communication skills, learn about nature’s cycles, and make ILES a more sustainable school.

A Note from “JTN”:



Inter-Lake fourth graders explore their school with a new perspective by using a compass.

“

The first moment I set foot in I-LES, I was welcomed graciously through the doors by Mrs. Angela Stutzman at the front desk, and I knew I was experiencing “something special.” From that moment forward, Mrs. Stutzman never once failed to greet me in the warmest manner, and her infectious enthusiasm spread to the rest of the students and staff. Any time I roam the hallways staff call me by a nickname Mrs. Stutzman introduced: “Jake the Naturalist,” and students excitedly say hello with the shortened version, “JTN.”

There is little that has given me the same sense of place and pride as entering a classroom and seeing all the students jump up and announce “Jake is here!”

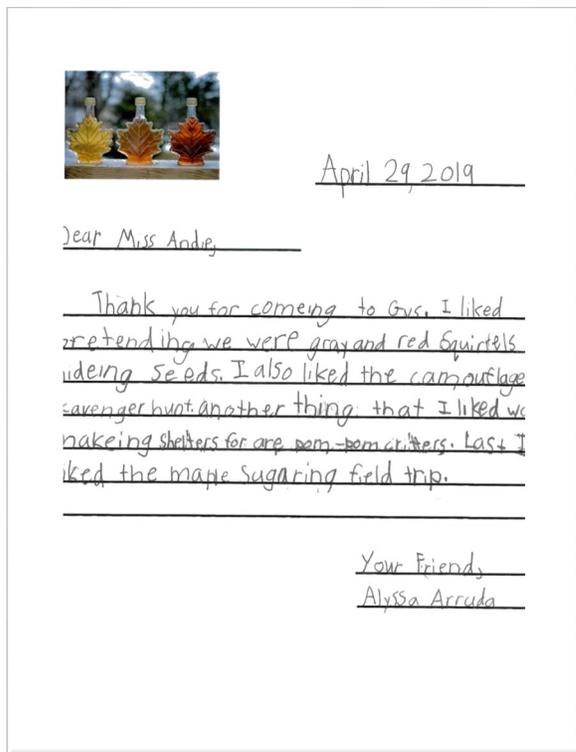
I feel fortunate to work in this school that is warm, welcoming, and invested in outdoor, place-based education. The level of whole-community investment in our Naturalist in the Classroom program has been both heartwarming and astounding. Everywhere you look, the people of the Inter-Lakes community strive to embody their school motto: “Do Your Best!”

I cannot wait to return in the Fall.

”

Grantham Village School

Grantham Village School included two field trips to Prescott Farm in their Naturalist in the Classroom program this year. In March, second grade experienced an old-fashioned New England tradition— making maple syrup! From tapping a tree to tasting delicious maple syrup, they participated hands-on in every step of the syrup making process. They built tree ID skills, learned the parts of a tree and their functions, used measuring tools to find an appropriate tree to tap, used historical and modern tree tapping tools, learned the history of maple sugaring including Native American legends, and discovered the math and chemical/physical science in the boiling process.



First grade explored life at the pond this spring. They learned all about amphibians and other aquatic species, including their life cycles and the sometimes surprising appearance of their offspring (look for a picture of a dragonfly nymph!) Then, they grabbed ponding nets and observation buckets and hiked to the water. These field trips were a fun way to reinforce our learning from their school. If your school or group is interested in a field trip, find more information on our website!

Gilmanton School

Biomimicry is a design process that integrates applying lessons from nature to the invention of healthier, more sustainable technologies for people. During the winter, sixth graders learned the steps of the biomimicry design spiral: define, biologize, discover, abstract, emulate, and evaluate. After visiting the nature trail to make observations for inspiration, pairs of students sketched designs and shared information about its functions and elements inspired by nature. Improvements for buildings, clothes, and tools were all inspired by what students observed outside the school.

In the final program of the school year, third graders reviewed concepts on orienteering and on ecosystem relationships from previous programs in an "Orienteering Ecology Mystery." They reviewed the parts of a compass, how to use the tool, and practiced taking bearings. Then, they went to the nature trail to search for clues to solve an ecology mystery by playing "Compass Follow the Leader." In pairs, students received directions to find east and take 8 paces, walk 10 steps after finding 240°, and continued to follow similar directions until they found hints that described animals that may live in this New Hampshire forest ecosystem.

What Teachers are Saying:

"This program compliments what we are teaching in the classroom, and allows for a more hands on approach. It also allows the students time to get outside of their traditional classroom setting. I love what this program provides for my students. Andie has been wonderful to work with and I look forward to another great year!"

First Grade Teacher, Gilmanton

"[Students] loved going out to different places around our school discovering new and diverse things. It expands their sense of community boundaries and what is available to them everyday to explore."

Kindergarten Teacher, Inter-Lakes

"The lessons were hands-on and engaging."

Erin Towle, Inter-Lakes

What Students are Saying:

"It was my first time planting seeds outside!"

Joseph Hollins, Belmont

"It was an interactive experience!"

Olivia McGonagle, Belmont

"Thank you for teaching the life cycle of a tree's life. Exploring the big log was fun. Digging in the log was so much fun."

Caitlyn, Lena, and Ellie, Gilmanton

"Thank you for all your lessons. I appreciate the work that you put into your lessons. I enjoyed especially being in the woods."

Grant, Grantham

Did You Know?

Studies show that:

- Time outside and outdoor learning IMPROVES students' focus in the classroom (not the opposite!)

Kuo, et. al. Do Lessons in Nature Boost Subsequent Classroom Engagement? Refueling Students in Flight. Frontiers in Psychology. 04 Jan 2018.

- "Doses of nature" help children diagnosed with attention deficit disorders concentrate better.

Taylor & Kuo. Children With Attention Deficits Concentrate Better After Walk in the Park. Journal of Attention Disorders. 01 March 2009.

- Teachers have reported that environmental education programs have improved their students' maturity levels, self esteem, poise, and autonomy.

Volk TL, Cheak MJ. The effects of an environmental education program on students, parents, and community. Journal of Environmental Education. 2003;34(4):12 - 25.

- Even just a one-day experience in nature results in a lasting impact—students retain ecological knowledge longer than students using conventional curricula.

Farmer J, Knapp D, Benton GM. An elementary school environmental education field trip: Long-term effects on ecological and environmental knowledge and attitude development. Journal of Environmental Education. 2007;38(3):33 - 42.

Belmont Elementary

Belmont Elementary partnered with Prescott Farm to apply for a grant from The Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation. The previous spring, Ms. Andie led first and third grade learners in planting a few radishes and greens, which sprouted school-wide interest to scale up their growing space and make it accessible to all of the school's 417 Pre-K – Grade 4 learners. We are happy to share that the school was awarded a \$5,000 Lowe's Toolbox for Education® grant that funded the materials needed to build 10 raised bed gardens at the school. The beds were built at the PTO's annual Playground Party with a strong showing of community support. For the last Naturalist in the Classroom program of the year, Ms. Andie met with all classes kindergarten through fourth grade to plant zucchini, summer squash, cucumbers, green beans, pumpkins, lettuce, radishes, carrots, peas, broccoli, and sunflowers. Students will be welcomed back to school next year with a garden full of fresh produce!



In addition to this exciting news, Belmont students stayed busy throughout the school year exploring the Tiger Trail and learning more about the natural world. Seasonal adventures included winter snowshoeing and spring habitat comparisons. These experiences connect students with their community, as explained by Christina Reynolds, 1st grade teacher: "I love how all of our learning activities with NIC utilize the space at our school and the surrounding grounds! It is so meaningful to students when they are looking for animal tracks, testing seed distribution and observing nature right here around our school."

Meet Our Educators

Andie Hession

School & Community Programs Director,
ahession@prescottfarm.org
(Belmont, Gilmanton, & Grantham)

Andie started with Prescott Farm in October 2017. She graduated from George Washington University in Washington, DC with a B.S. in Public Health, where she became interested in the connections between food, the environment, and health. She spent two years as a FoodCorps service member in rural Arkansas where she managed a school garden and taught food- and garden-based lessons to students of all ages. After FoodCorps, Andie worked with several environmental education programs across New England before joining the team at Prescott Farm. Andie enjoys hikes with her dog, gardening and cooking with the veggies, and exploring New Hampshire's great outdoors.



Jake Newcomb

Camp Director, jnewcomb@prescottfarm.org
(Inter-Lakes)

Jake grew up in Maine and currently lives in Fryeburg. He received his B.A. in History with a minor in secondary education from UMaine Orono and holds a Maine teaching certificate. He has spent time working for all three 4-H camps located in Maine before joining the team at Prescott Farm in July 2018 as the Interim Camp Director. Jake enjoys all things outdoors – including hiking, camping, backpacking and canoeing – when he is not at home with his cats Chloe and Mabel, as well as various foster kittens.



Meet Alex!

Alex Dyer

Environmental Educator, adyer@prescottfarm.org

Alex joined Prescott Farm as our newest Environmental Educator in May 2019. She was born and raised in Maine and spent most of her youth running amok in the woods, exploring and engaging with the native wildlife. Alex received her B.S. in Biology from the University of Maine and moved to New Hampshire, where she spent some time as a Naturalist for the New Hampshire Audubon. At Prescott Farm, Alex hopes to bring her science and conservation background to the community, while she also pursues her M.S. in Sustainable Natural Resource Management. In her free time, she can be found mountain biking at Bear Brook State Park or red-lining the White Mountain National Forest.



Community Connections at Prescott Farm

If you are reading this newsletter and thinking to yourself, “Wow, I wish I could participate in some of these programs!” you are in luck—you can! Over the course of the year we host many Community Connection Programs at Prescott Farm.

Bring your family to **Our Big Backyard** series, sponsored by Kennel Orthodontics. Explore nature in every season. Next in the series:

- July 27: Pollinator Power!
- August 15: Plants to Plates
- September 21: Amazing Mushrooms

On September 21-22, we have our first **Beginner Bushcraft Overnight** for adults. Challenge yourself to learn valuable skills that could help you in a survival situation. Under the experienced guidance of our camp director, you will construct a shelter, build a fire and cook over it, tie knots, gather water and other useful skills.

To see a full list of upcoming programs and to register, visit our website at: www.prescottfarm.org

Do you know a school that needs
Naturalist in the Classroom?

We are always looking to expand into more Lakes Region schools. Since 2001 Prescott Farm's team of Naturalists and Environmental Educators have connected students and teachers to their communities and the natural environment. The staff works directly with teachers to integrate curriculum requirements into lesson plans that utilize the resources at hand. These lessons create opportunities for hands-on, placed-based learning and facilitating an enhanced understanding and respect for nature, natural systems, the natural history of the area, and the adoption of environmental stewardship practices.

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Visit us on the web at
www.prescottfarm.org



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