

'Kids Discover the Trail!' Celebrates Full Circle



Raylene Ludgate leads third-grade students through the Wildflower Garden.

A group of fifth graders is now the first to have completed the full circle of all eight Kids Discover the Trail! (KDT) learning experiences during their elementary school years. This year also marks the seventh anniversary of the Ithaca Discovery Trail's KDT program.

Through KDT, Plantations offers our Wildflower Explorations program to all third-grade students in the Ithaca and Trumansburg school districts. Youth education coordinator Raylene Ludgate and a cadre of dedicated volunteers visit each school to introduce students to native plants found in our Mundy Wildflower Garden. The classes then take a field trip to the garden to see and learn more first-hand about wildflowers and their unique habitats. Since participating in KDT, Plantations has delivered the Wildflower Explorations program to close to 2,500 third-graders.

KDT is a collaboration of the Ithaca Public Education Initiative, Ithaca City School District, Trumansburg School District, and the Discovery Trail that connects elementary students and teachers with the trail organizations for programs complementing their curriculum. Discovery Trail sites include the Johnson Museum of Art, Plantations, and Lab of Ornithology at Cornell, and Tompkins County Public Library, Museum of

the Earth, Sciencenter, Cayuga Nature Center, and the History Center's Eight Square Schoolhouse. Program themes include animals in art, dinosaur science, clean energy, 19th-century life, and local bird habitats.

To celebrate the full circle anniversary, all Discovery Trail sites hosted a special program on May 12 for students, their families, and visitors wishing to learn about KDT. At Plantations, we invited students to taste, smell, and compare the ginger plant used to make gingersnaps to our native plant, wild ginger, before exploring the beautiful spring-blooming Wildflower Garden. ■

Sonja Skelly,
Director of Education

