

Discovery Trail Recognizes Value of KDT

By Nancy Grossman

Imagine: A program where elementary school students discover the world—here in Tompkins County—and gain experiences that inspire them to become more engaged students, better critical thinkers and lifelong learners.

Kids Discover the Trail! (KDT) is designed to do all of this, and more, by providing field trips and educational programs at the eight world-class venues of the Discovery Trail. The Discovery Trail partnership comprising the Cayuga Nature Center, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cornell Plantations, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Museum of the Earth at PRI, Sciencenter, The History Center in Tompkins County and Tompkins County Public Library was established in 1999. It grew out of years of informal collaborations among the museums and the public library to provide a structure for ongoing synergy.

Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI) invited the Discovery Trail to join in the pilot of KDT and the program continued to grow until all Discovery Trail sites and ICSD teachers were participating.

Here is what a fourth-grade teacher says about her experience at the History Center's Eight Square Schoolhouse, where students spend a day of living history in 1892: "We appreciate the service you provide to all the fourth-graders in the area. Every one of our students looks forward to their visit, and as they move on, they recall their experience at the Eight Square Schoolhouse with fondness. Nothing can replace the experience of being immersed in a situation to allow kids (and adults) to reflect upon what we have and what we need in our world today. The Eight Square experience does just that."

Through KDT, students have an opportunity to learn by experience. As an integral part of the program, Discovery Trail educators work with classroom teachers to coordinate student experiences at the Discovery Trail sites with pre-trip and post-trip activities. Students receive their own book to take home and share with their

family to reinforce what they learned during their field trip. For Discovery Trail sites charging admission during regular museum hours, students also receive a complimentary family come-back pass to visit again. Discovery Trail sites work with a specific grade based on content themes that coordinate between the museum and academic priorities.

"For 10 years, KDT has given us the opportunity to connect Ithaca's third graders to our region's native wildflowers. When they visit our Wildflower Garden and we observe their curiosity, their awe and their learning we are grateful for the chance to make a lasting difference in our children's lives," says Sonja Skelly, Director of Education at Cornell Plantations.

KDT offers students many benefits over individual class field trips. Students have equal access to all eight Discovery Trail sites. Their experiences lead to greater understanding about their local and global communities and build awareness of our outstanding local educational resources. Consistency means that schools can offer their students comparable experiences year to year. Because KDT is professionally evaluated each year, rapid adjustments can be made to content, materials and logistics.

Each of the Discovery Trail organizations has a staff educator that works with ICSD teachers to make the KDT field trip the most engaging and educational experience possible, as noted by the following education and executive directors.

"Through Kids Discover the Trail!, the Sciencenter is able to help every child in our community develop a personal relationship with science," says Charlie Trautmann, Executive Director of the Sciencenter.

"KDT brings children who might otherwise not make it to the Tompkins County Public Library for an informative tour and story time. Children not only learn about the library and what we offer, but we strive to help them discover the importance of the library in their lifelong learning adventure," says Sarah Glogowski, Youth Services Department Head at the library.

"KDT provides opportunities for all Ithaca



Local fifth-graders experience the high ropes challenge at the Cayuga Nature Center with KDT.

children to enjoy getting outside and learning about the natural world. This becomes ever more important as children spend increasing amounts of time indoors and disconnected from nature," says Nancy Trautmann, Director of Education at Cornell's Lab of Ornithology.

Kids Discover the Trail! is a one-of-a-kind example of how collaboration can bring outstanding educational opportunities. The partnership and aligned goals for student engagement that exist between the Discovery Trail, Ithaca City School District and the Ithaca Public

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Southworth Library Events!

MLK Jr- The Man and His Message Thurs Jan 22, 7pm :

"Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community" with Dr. Eversley Bradwell from Ithaca College with film and book discussions. The books and Companion Guide are available at the library.

Bonkers for Books! Sat., Jan., 17 at 1pm:

Family storytime celebrating books and stories about books!

Listen to books, make a book and take a book home!

Program sponsored through generous funds from the Bernard Rosen Library Fund of the Community Foundation of Tompkins County.

Cuddle-Up every Wednesday at 10am

songs, stories and fingerplays for infants, toddlers and their caregivers.

Preschool Storytime, Fridays at 10am

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For more info 607-844-4782

www.southworthlibrary.org

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Hike

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he says. He’s posting images to Facebook as he travels, documenting intimate details of our region, things you would barely notice if you were driving by them in a car.

Toward the end of each day’s hike, he stops at homes asking if he can camp on their property. “I have a card which tells people what I am doing and asks them if they would let me pitch my tent on their yard for one night,” he writes. “So far two of nine people asked let me camp on their property,” he said last week. “Two nights I had to find some other place to camp. On one night, I was offered camping before I asked.”

To communicate, Chandler has laminated cards with sayings on them, such as “I’m sorry to hear that,” “That’s awesome!” “That was delicious!” and “I’ll never forget your kindness.”

The weather thus far has fluctuated from cold to mild to really cold, with ice, rain and snow. But Chandler has experience camping in all conditions, and is prepared for whatever nature throws his way. “It was cold and it was snowing when I started Dec. 31. On the really cold mornings I like to get up after sunrise. I’ve done a lot of backpacking before, so I’m used to putting up with all kinds of weather,” he says.

This walk is giving Chandler a real appreciation for the beauty of the Finger Lakes region. “I love nature. It seems there are many waterfowl such as Canada Geese. On several nights I’ve heard Canada geese honking as they flew by. I’ve seen some raptors and a few ravens. This morning I saw two

beautiful foxes running through the woods. They were so beautiful, it looked like they were in love,” he says.

Chandler still welcomes anyone who wants to join him for any portion of his walk. Follow him at Twitter@greenridercc, or search Facebook for Charles Chandler (greenrider). Donations can be made at www.gofundme.com/silencetwinterhike.

Legislature

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working on the issue—and many other legislators echoed those sentiments, crediting Solid Waste Manager Barbara Eckstrom, County Administrator Joe Mareane and County Attorney Jonathan Wood for making it happen.

Eckstrom called the experience one of the most satisfying in her more than two decades of county service, saying she learned to listen and understand the benefits of a living wage for employees, the program, and the community. Shinagawa called it a “wonderful moment,” pointing out that the steady work on the issue shows the quality of leadership in the county to achieve social change.

McBean-Clairborne thanked Milton Webb and Stanley McPherson in being “positively relentless” in bringing the living wage issue before the legislature. As part of his remarks to the legislature before the vote, Tompkins County Workers Center Director Pete Meyers voiced his thanks to the legislature and staff, and also shared recorded words of thanks from Webb.

Environmental Preservation

Lawmakers, without dissent, voted to allocate \$20,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resources Protection to support additions to two existing nature preserves in Tompkins County. The action provides funding for the acquisition by the Finger Lakes Land Trust of 30 acres to be added to the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in the Town of Danby and for a 24-acre addition to the Roy H. Park Preserve in the Town of Dryden.

The two acquisitions by the Land Trust will protect wetlands and undeveloped land in those areas and will serve as key links between protected lands within the Emerald Necklace greenbelt.

In other business, five people, most of them residents of Danby, addressed the legislature to express deep concern about a recent incident on Hornbrook Road in Danby, and said they would like more information about the actions of law enforcement and destruction of a home.

Later in the meeting Klein, who represents Danby, said funds to assist the widow and family of David Cady have been set up through Danby Federated Church and through the website GoFundMe.com. Public Safety Committee vice chairman Dennis said he has asked the County Sheriff’s office to provide a recap of the Hornbrook Road incident at the Jan. 12 committee meeting.

Boats

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really worked well for a while.” But after the Civil War, massive railroad projects popped up across the

country and it was easier to keep goods moving along the rails. There was no need for time-consuming transfers from train car to steamboat, or delays at locks while the water level rose or fell.

Captains, Commerce, and Community was made possible by a grant from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The History Center is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Look for upcoming programs involving the exhibit.

KDT

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Education Initiative demonstrates how a common vision brings together a community.

At the Discovery Trail’s own 10-year mark, the board of directors considered the organization’s mission and how to best serve the community and achieve the goal of creating lifelong learners. The conclusion was to reach out to all elementary students in Tompkins County schools and thus KDT grew to be the Discovery Trail’s priority program. The Discovery Trail member organizations continue to work on extending this educational opportunity to all county school districts and to all elementary grade levels within each district.

The Discovery Trail directors and staff members congratulate everyone involved in this 10-year milestone and look forward to continuing our work together.

Nancy Grossman is the Discovery Trail Coordinator.

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