

KDT's First Decade is Well Documented

By Mary Grainger

Monthly articles about Kids Discover the Trail! (KDT) Ithaca have been published by Tompkins Weekly commemorating the 10th anniversary of this unique program for Ithaca City School District (ICSD) elementary school students. Different individuals have researched and written the feature stories covering the many facets of KDT. With this 10th edition, the year-long celebration of the “Decade of Discovery” will be summarized with an eye to the future.

In September, four of the founders of KDT reflected on the impetus for creating the ambitious partnership among the Discovery Trail, ICSD and the Ithaca Public Education Initiative (IPEI). “I am so proud of this collaborative effort and the participation of over 25,000 students since it began,” said Don Rakow, retired director of the Cornell Plantations. “The KDT model successfully provides students and teachers with meaningful, hands-on activities that support classroom learning and engage students’ imaginations.”

Each of the 2,900 students in the ICSD’s eight elementary schools has experiences every year that coordinate their grade level learning goals with one of the eight world-class venues of the Discovery Trail: Cayuga Nature Center, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Cornell Plantations, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Museum of the Earth at PRI (Paleontological Research Institute), Sciencenter, The History Center in Tompkins County and Tompkins County Public Library.

Terry Byrnes, past president of IPEI and chair of the KDT Ithaca Steering Committee, explained that as students advance from one grade to the next, they move to a different Discovery Trail site so that at the end of their seven years, they have experienced all eight programs. “Social interaction is also part of the Ithaca program which helps students from our elementary schools gain a better understand-



A collage of KDT photos that is currently displayed on eight TCAT buses traveling throughout the area.

ing of each other and have connections across the large district before middle school.” KDT partners all ICSD elementary students in over 150 classrooms with another classroom at the same grade level for the field trip. There are also many classroom-based pre- and post-trip activities.

When KDT was a pilot program in 2005, Sciencenter Executive Director Charlie Trautmann said, “For the Discovery Trail, the program will help fulfill our mission to better share our educational resources with the community. For our community, we believe that increased exposure to the arts, science and learning benefits everyone.” In an Ithaca Journal editorial that May, IPEI was commended for its role initiating KDT: “These institutions are jewels, but they only achieve their full worth when all members of the community are able to take advantage of their assets. By bringing thousands of kids to these sites—at no cost to the students or area taxpayers—IPEI has enhanced its own already significant value to Ithaca.”

In October, “KDT Books Enhance Experiences with Discovery Trail” by Heather Zimar described the use of take-home books that correspond with the themes of each grade level-site pairing. “KDT Books were first added to the program as an important way to reinforce the content from the trip

and add a literacy component,” said Byrnes. “They also create a connection between the family and the student’s KDT experience.” “Giving a book is a wonderful way to remind the child of their visit, and it is wonderful to be able to give a book to a child to have as their very own to keep,” said Sarah O’Shea, educator with the Tompkins County Public Library. “Any way we can increase a child’s at-home library the better. Children should be surrounded by books! It’s also a very concrete sign to the families of what their child did.”

“Buddies Are Brought Together by KDT” was published in November. “The KDT program epitomizes our unrelenting goals of community and learning here in Ithaca,” said Ithaca High School Principal Jason Trumble. “Kids connecting and learning together across elementary schools is a great introduction to the relationships they will develop in middle school. Our yearbooks are filled with pictures of students on the trail, and students readily recollect their experiences with one another. As a longtime secondary administrator, I continue to marvel at the deep impact KDT has had, and continues to have, on our youth preparing them for middle/high school and beyond.”

Over its history, KDT has relied on generous donations to IPEI by many individuals, foundations and

businesses. In December, “KDT Ithaca’s 10 Years Possible Due to Community Support” examined the importance of charitable gifts that ensure that all students have the same chances to learn with the educators of the Discovery Trail. To participate in KDT trips, teachers don’t have to seek outside funding and the students don’t have to sell candy bars or fundraise. It’s all paid for by IPEI’s sponsors and donors while the ICSD provides transportation for all 150 trips annually, reported IPEI Board Member Marshall McCormick.

“Discovery Trail Recognizes Value of KDT” was written by Nancy Grossman, Discovery Trail Coordinator. She said, “At the Discovery Trail’s own ten-year mark, our board considered our mission and how to best serve our community and achieve our goal of 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.” Each of the Discovery Trail organizations has a staff educator who has worked with ICSD teachers to make the KDT field trip the most engaging

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GOD OF CARNAGE

BY YASMINA REZA, TRANSLATED BY CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

DIRECTED BY STEVE PACEK



A COMEDY OF MANNERS... WITHOUT THE MANNERS

JUNE 11-20

“EVENINGS IN THE THEATER DON'T GET ANY FUNNIER.” – The Record

After two 11-year-old boys have a fight on the playground, their parents meet to resolve the situation with civility and reason. But manners are quickly forgotten and all hell breaks loose as the evening devolves into a laugh-out-loud train wreck of bad behavior. Recommended for mature audiences.

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Namgyal Institute to Hold Ritual Ceremony

The Namgyal Institute for Buddhist Studies has announced the 2015 Kalachakra Ritual Ceremony, Cultivating World Peace Through Cultivating Inner Peace, June 24 to July 7 at the Namgyal Monastery - Du Khor Choe Ling The Land of Kalachakra Study and Practice, 201 Tibet Drive, Route 96B Danby Road, Ithaca.

The Kalachakra is a unique system of the highest yoga tantra in Tibetan Buddhism, and its ritual ceremony is considered very subtle and important to the cultivation of personal inner peace and by extension, world peace.

The ritual ceremony involves

the making of a sand mandala by monks, ritual chanting, dances, prayers and meditation practice sessions. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has given many Kalachakra initiations, and monks from the Namgyal Monastery have provided numerous teachings on Kalachakra throughout the world.

Namgyal monks from India and Ithaca, including the Abbot of Namgyal Monastery, India, will perform the ceremony.

The public is welcome to come and observe any of the events held in the main shrine room during the Kalachakra Ceremony The public is also welcome to view the

mandala after completion of its construction during periods between ceremony practice sessions.

Students who wish to participate in the Kalachakra Ritual Ceremony practice sessions and receive teachings on the Kalachakra must register with Namgyal Monastery. An outline of the teachings that will be covered during the retreat can be found in the detailed schedule listed on the website.

The cost for participation in the ritual ceremony and receiving teachings is \$700 per week. This includes three vegetarian meals per day, and all study materials.

Lodging costs are separate.

Among the events open to the public are the Earth Ritual Dance on June 25, 1:30 to 3 p.m.; Sand Mandala Construction, June 25 to 30, 10:30 a.m. to noon and 2 to 5 p.m.; Ritual Dance Offering, July 1, 1:30 to 3 p.m.; Self-Empowerment, July 1, 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.; Actual Ritual Ceremony, July 2 to 7, 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1:30 to 3 p.m.; Fire Puja: July 7, 9:30 a.m. to noon; Final Ceremony, July 7, 1:30 to 4 p.m.

For more information and a detailed schedule of events go to www.namgyal.org and select "calendar of events."

KDT

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and educational experience possible. The other Tompkins County school districts have this foundation to build upon when adopting KDT programming.

Holly Kazarinoff, Coordinator of Cooperative Enrichment Services at TST BOCES, wrote "Educators, Teachers Connect with KDT". To make it easier for teachers and educators to connect before each cycle of trips, there is one annual gathering for the 150 adults who work together to meet in one place. After greeting friends, partaking in delicious snacks, and hearing some inspirational words; the teachers divide into grade levels and meet with their site's educators to share what's working well and what could be done differently.

In March, "Transportation Plays Key Role in KDT" included Jennifer Engel, president of IPEI, who helped found KDT as well as IPEI: "I am so very proud and in awe of how well the teachers and the bus drivers and Transportation Department have worked together over the years to improve and respond to the enormous task of moving every elementary student to the DT sites. Everyone works under the basic premise that this is a great experience for our children and worth every ounce of effort it takes to make it happen."

"Parents Recognize the Benefits of KDT" included how KDT Ithaca connects school, community and family. Lauren Loiacono, mother of three Caroline Elementary School students, has chaperoned many trips. "I have been able to witness a number of my children's classmates experience community resources to which they otherwise would not have been exposed," she said, "KDT field trips give every student in the Ithaca schools the opportunity to experience a variety of educational gems in our community. These trips are so important to help establish common experience among all students, regardless of socio-economic background and access to transportation and other means."

Randi Beckmann, Teacher Liaison and member of the KDT Steering Committee, worked with parent Mya Thompson on "Technology Tools Extend KDT Learning KDT" for May. KDT has prompted teachers to develop new applications of technology to strengthen student learning. In turn new opportunities are now available for ICSD students to use technology. ICSD Director of Technology Dominick Lissi remarked, "KDT Ithaca is a fantastic opportunity for our students, providing them with both an immersive and transformative, hands-on experience. I'm

thrilled that KDT has been a springboard for innovative uses of technology."

Since KDT is a priority of IPEI, it continues to evaluate, improve and manage the Ithaca program while the Discovery Trail is taking increased responsibility for fundraising, marketing and coordination during this period of county-wide expansion. "KDT as a Discovery Trail priority aligns with our mission of providing accessible

educational opportunities," stated Trautmann.

As word spreads about the Ithaca program, other districts are interested in joining KDT. In the spring of 2010, Trumansburg Central Schools used the KDT Ithaca model for Trumansburg Kids Explore and Discover, and now is under the countywide KDT umbrella. In 2014 and 2015, Groton, Newfield and Lansing began pilots. As one parent said, "Each Discovery Trail site is rich in

experience and learning opportunities, and it would be a mistake to not share these gems with all of our schoolchildren."

To get involved as a supporter or volunteer, or to help make connections across Tompkins County, visit www.ipei.org and www.kidsdiscoverthetrail.org.

Mary Grainger, IPEI Vice President, is involved with the Public Relations, Development and KDT committees.

2015 Boating Safety Training Schedule

We start at 9am and continue to 1pm on both Saturday & Sunday. All those who pass the exam at the end of class will receive a NYS Boating Safety Certificate. (Required for anyone operating a personal watercraft, and anyone born after May 1, 1996 operating a motorboat.)

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