



Joel Beauman enjoyed RiverDay at Profile Falls.. Photo: Molly Kidane

AE/MS JOINS RIVERDAY IN BRISTOL

Winter approaching, geese are finally winging southward. Squirrels scurry for winter stores. What's this, you say? Newfound area fourth graders have begun an annual migration? Do tell!

For the past three years, 150 fourth grade students from the Newfound Area School District have converged on Profile Falls Recreation Area in Bristol. This year, Andover students joined the trek. If not a migration to warmer climes, the annual ritual of RiverDay is in every respect an exodus of purpose: nine- and ten-year-olds in search of knowledge, creative expression, and excitement along the banks of the Pemigewasset and Smith Rivers. This year's student migration took place on Friday, October 19.

"Reading and math are utmost," said RiverDay coordinator Cherie Blessing of Andover, "but it's important that our students examine where they come from." Blessing, Danbury Elementary's fourth grade teacher, is among the founders of the district's RiverDay. With the help of all the district's fourth grade staff and Andover's faculty, the day has grown by leaps and bounds.

Nancy Tripp, also of Andover, is a fourth grade teacher at Bristol Elementary. She likened RiverDay to "weaving a tapestry" for the students' year-long study of New Hampshire. RiverDay is the warp, and gives kids the background knowledge – "the strands that hold up the tapestry and give our curriculum shape," said Tripp. "Then," she continued, "throughout the year, the colorful strands of the weft are woven as we study each aspect of New Hampshire."

The RiverDay concept originated as a collaboration of teachers at Blessing's former school in Grantham, in partnership with Connecticut RiverFest. "We wanted the children to focus on their connection with New Hampshire's rivers," she said. "From plants and animals, to Native American culture – and just about everything in between that has to do with our local rivers – that's RiverDay in a nutshell," she said.

Newfound's version of RiverDay included over a dozen workshops at which the fourth graders learned about all as-

pects of their local watershed. Representatives from New Hampshire's Fish and Game Department give a lecture on fur bearing mammals, including an array of animal skins that most students recognized immediately.

"The skunk skin's easy," said Sean Williamson, formerly of New Hampshire Fish and Game, "but the kids had a tougher time with the fisher cat and beaver furs."

Chief Peter Newell, of the New Hampshire Intertribal Native American Council, led a cultural workshop and pow-wow. Linda Happy One Mitchell, Mike Laughy, and Womanbird recounted Native American lore. Haunting melodies were played on hand-crafted flutes made by Robert Kunnaway Turner, Jr. of the Penacook Tribe.

There were plenty of opportunities for the students to be creative. Art teacher Denise Plante-Renaud made sure that all artists-in-training had the materials necessary to capture RiverDay in various media. "We've got a lot of talent in these children, excuse me, artists," she said. Students wishing to meditate found their way to the rocks at the foot of Profile Falls, where they were encouraged to write poetry and reflections on the day, and the place.

For the more scientifically focused among the "fourth grade nation," Bristol resident (and fourth grade classroom aide) Bruce Van Derven described the "creepy crawly" station. "I remember as a boy coming ashore from the Fowler river covered in leeches and wanting them off – now! Our kids were scouting for all the strange water creatures and getting smart about them. How times have changed!"

Bristol Elementary Schooler Jason Iovino said some of the insects looked like scorpions, and there was a near-stampede of 9-year-olds to see a four-inch catfish. Macroinvertebrate scientist Daphne Klein was deluged by inquisitive students and was heard to declare, "One question at a time," more than a few times!

The hosts of RiverDay were Park Rangers Jen Rockett and Karen Tryon of

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AE/MS Parent-Teacher Organization

By Carmen Bates
AE/MS PTO

The AE/MS PTO met on November 19 in the AE/MS library.

The Holiday Shoppe is a chance for the children to buy gifts for their family members, and it happens on Friday, December 14, from 8 AM to 2:30 PM.

Anyone who is interested in helping out at the Holiday Shoppe is welcome to come for any part of the day. We need people to help children make choices in their purchases and bag and pay for their items. We also need new or almost new items for the Shoppe, and these can be sent into the school. It is good to donate items that dads, moms and children would enjoy.

Last year, 1,500 items were purchased by the children. All the money that is made at this Shoppe is used to support field trips and student activities.

The Original Works Art order has been sent in, and the items should arrive at the school and be sent home with the children on December 10. It was a

great success, and thank you to all who bought art!

We will be decorating wreaths in the gym on Saturday, December 1, from 8 AM until they are all done. We need people to come in and help decorate, and it will help you get in the holiday spirit! Join us for all or just some of the time.

School staff birthdays in December are Mrs. Lance and Mrs. Pellegrino. Happy Birthday!

Thank you to Brandy Collette and Victoria Tilton for heading a refreshment table at the Veteran's Day celebration. Thank you also to Karen Holman for taking pictures at the Grandparents Thanksgiving and to Heidi Terwilliger for ordering the school sweatshirts and t-shirts for us.

We will not have a PTO meeting in December. The next meeting is Monday, January 7, at 6:30 PM in the AE/MS library.

To help out in any of the above areas or for any questions, contact Carmen at canddplus4@comcast.net or 735-5589.



Kaitlyn French, Donna French, and Amber French enjoyed the annual Grandparents Thanksgiving at AE/MS this year. Photo: Karen Holman

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