



GRAND OPENING AT THE CENTER

T.E.A.C.H. Outdoors

winter news edition

Tradition, education, adventure, conservation, habitat

2017-A Year of Growth

by Melissa Cavenaile

Thinking back over the past year, I am astounded by all the support and generosity we have experienced at TEACH Outdoors!

In January and February, we were in "banquet mode" as we worked to make all the preparations to host a dinner and raise all the money we possibly could to support the mission of getting kids outdoors for the 2017 calendar year. When March *finally* came and the banquet was over, we were overwhelmed to discover that we had exceeded our goal and achieved what we had only dared to dream of! We were astonished at the generosity of businesses and individuals leading up to and during the banquet. We were able to plan events for the rest of the year knowing that we could host the same events we did in the previous year PLUS add new events and purchase additional equipment and supplies, if needed.

April was our first event of the year and we were able to spend it with Girl Scouts from the region at Three Rivers Camp. Each troop built their own wood duck box to install to provide habitat for the wood duck in areas where mature hardwood trees are lacking. Each girl earned their Green Wings pin for their efforts in Conservation. They also

learned other survival and camping skills and ended with a duck calling seminar.

In May and June, we hosted the first of many fishing derbies and duck calling seminars at Black Road access to the Rock Run Preserve and Woodsmoke Ranch in Seneca. In July, we returned to Woodsmoke to have another fishing derby, duck calling seminar and overnight camp out. It's a great venue and a provides us with a gorgeous view at sunrise.

Our first archery target challenge of the year was made possible by attending Neighborhood Fest at the First Baptist Church in Morris. We helped kids build 50 bird houses and hosted a duck calling seminar. August is also the Will County Fair. TEACH Outdoors spent the week spreading the word about our mission, duck calling with fair-goers and raffling some gorgeous guns. Each day, we gave away a Daisy Red Ryder BB gun to a lucky kid. And to end the month, our very first TEACH Outdoors scholarship recipient, Allison Lyman, began her college career.

September helped us to admit our need to retire our old trailer and purchase a newer and larger one. We had many supporters come forward to help us make that a reality!

Our annual board meeting was held in October and so was the Grundy County Corn Festival. It was a fun day that was filled with added adventure for our President, Jim Smith. We ended up earning 2nd Place in the Youth Homemade Float Category. Later in October, TEACH was scheduled to participate in a Scarecrow Fest and teach about bats and build bat boxes to help the bat population recover. The event was cancelled because the weather forecast guaranteed a wash out. The seed was planted in our minds that having a place to call our own would be nice, but the idea stayed firmly in the "dream" category.



With the Girl Scouts on Earth Day (above) & Neighborhood Fest (below).



The Center

TEACH Outdoors' new place to perch

By November, we were swapping hunting stories, recipes and sharing photos of trophies and reminiscing about the warmer days of summer that faded into fall. Our attention had already turned to banquet planning for 2018 as we searched for a caterer. But something else happened in November. A chance meeting at the Will County Fair turned into an opportunity.

The Reed Custer Primary School was sitting vacant and the Godly water reclamation district only needed 2 acres of the open 9 acres that sat behind the old school. The thought of demolishing a perfectly good building seemed wasteful to them, so they decided to turn it into a community center.

The hope and idea of the Braidwood Coalition and others who see the value in saving the school, is that it can become a hub of activity to serve the community. The work we do at TEACH Outdoors to serve children

and help them discover the joy of nature was recognized as adding value to the community, so a very gracious contract was extended to us. With our desire to have a place where our events could go on as planned no matter what the weather, we knew this was the right partnership. The water reclamation district only wanted the rental contract to cover the cost of utilities. They knew that our not for profit's purpose was to spend our money on our mission (the children) and not on rent.

We are thrilled at this partnership and the opportunities that the building, property and office space allow.

The Open House on Martin Luther King Jr. day was a fantastic snowy day. The smell of fresh baked cookies and hot cocoa filled the hallways. Many brave souls came out to check out The Center to see what TEACH Outdoors was all about. This once vacant preschool/kinder classroom (pictured to the right) was played in by lovely children as it was intended to! It was fantastic to hear activity and laughter coming from the gym and see kids' drawings on the white boards. It's the perfect home for TEACH Outdoors!



THIS ROOM IS ACROSS FROM THE TEACH OUTDOORS OFFICE.

The windows face the courtyard.

Shiny New Trailer

When TEACH Outdoors is invited to an event, we are usually directed to an open field or the perimeter of a pond. When we are fishing, we need 40 fishing poles. When we do archery, we need tables, shooting lanes, targets and shade. Everywhere we go, we bring with our registration information, tables, chairs, pre-cut wood for habitat building, and a generator for our power tools. The trailer upgrade was not a "want" but a "need."

We appreciate all the people who wanted to see us attain our goal & upgrade our trailer to make *teaching outdoors* easier! We can hold more tents, bows, targets, poles, yard games, tables, chairs, food, snacks and duck calls that the kids we teach have come to know and love. As amazing as 2017 was, we are beyond excited to see what we can do in the year to come.



Partners and sponsors make goals and dreams into reality at TEACH Outdoors. Our mission is to provide outdoor programs that allow children the opportunity to learn how to enjoy nature, adventure outdoors & desire to protect and conserve it for future generations. We cannot do it alone. We thank you for joining us and supporting our mission. The children thank you and so do we! With your continued support, we anticipate an incredible 2018!



THE COURTYARD THAT FEATURES A GAZEBO THAT IS JUST BEGGING TO BE USED TO TEACH KIDS ABOUT THE BEAUTIFUL BIRDS OF ILLINOIS!

View of the courtyard from the doors.