

Annual Report for the ELMCCE Adventure Crew Summer 2008

We were pleased to report that we had 18 campers enrolled in the ELMCCE Summer Adventure Crew Camp ranging in ages 9 to 13.

Participants included:

- 6 girls and 12 boys
- 1 youth with special needs
- 1 nonresident to Winchester
- 8 campers who participated in the ELMCCE Summer Camp 2007
- 4 who had not participated in an ELMCCE camp in previous years but in other activities
- 2 campers had not participated in any other ELMCCE activity before

Registration goals originally set for this year were 25 campers enrolled in all six weeks. As incentive, families were offered discounts if enrolling in two consecutive weeks. Of the 18 registrants, 10 were enrolled in all six weeks, 3 were enrolled for only 1 week, 2 enrolled for 2 weeks and 1 enrolled for 5 weeks. Camper's not enrolled for all six weeks had the opportunity to explore other camps or were privileged with a family vacation.

We are proud to have created so many new partnerships within our community and have continued to develop the existing ones. Summer's Outback Outfitters offered a significant discount by waiving the shipping and delivery costs of the new kayak trailer. We were grateful to receive two grant awards; one a matching AFHY grant promoting healthy activity for youth and the other a community block grant from Wal Mart, both for program supplies. The Winchester's Ladies Society and our local Century 21 supported the purchase of 2 new kayaks. Without such generous donations and awards we would not have been able to fill our kayak trailer with enough kayaks for our Adventure Crew campers to fulfill their program goals.

The ELMCCE Adventure Crew has many successes to celebrate this summer. Fulfilling our mission, our camps are based on a foundation of healthy activity. This year's program combined keeping the body, and the mind, busy. Campers set out to research NH's wildlife and find ways to share their research with others. The Adventure Crew was taken on many adventures requiring them to hike and kayak, while being challenged with fieldwork, research and creative writing.

Amanda Borozinski, with the Star Spangled Banner, hosted a workshop teaching campers good interview skills, how to write an informative and interesting newspaper, and how to catch a reader's eye with creative headlines. Campers kept individual daily journals filled with notes from interviews and wildlife observational data. With that information, some campers wrote articles, some were in charge of submitting the Crew's questions for the weekly edition of the "Dear Irene" column, while others were assigned the role of photographer. Proudly, I have included copies of their work in this mailing.

With instruction from Winchester's own wildlife rehabilitator, Irene Ruth, campers studied habitats, identified the differences between threatened and endangered species, and the responsible measures humans should take to preserve them and promote population. Irene provided campers with a "behind the scenes" look at the adverse affects environmental factors play in endangering the population of specific native wildlife at her own center, The Winchester Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.

Other community leaders donated the use of their land for site work and kayak storage. One family hosted and "protected" the ELMACC kayaks and canoe on the their pond enabling staff to introduce paddling and kayak safety to first time kayakers of all ages. Another family volunteered their private waterfront boat launch property for a 3 day, 2-night outing observing the life patterns and natural influences bats have on the environment, specifically the insect population. They regrettably reported that the bats were not working fast enough on the evening mosquitoes! To encourage the growth of Winchester's bat population, campers made and hung 8 bat boxes to serve as homes and breeding nests.

One Winchester resident opened her summer home in Pittsborough, NH for a 4-day and 3 night NH loon counting. Led by John Cooley, a member of the Loon Preservation Committee and staff biologist, summer camp staff and one adult volunteer, the Adventure Crew spent their days kayaking NH waters to count the successes of the nesting rafts set out in the spring. Seven of these rafting nests were built during the ELMACC's April vacation activities. In the evening, the Crew participated in leisure activities such as fishing, variations of "Capture the Flag" and exploring their surroundings. During these evening explorations, campers were able to capture photographs of fox, duck, deer, loons and moose. The grandeur of a live moose will be a memory they share forever.

With an emphasis on teamwork, cooperation, critical thinking and conflict resolution the Adventure Crew worked most successfully when faced with the physical challenges and unplanned hurdles. While trying to complete one loon counting, campers experienced bad weather, turning an otherwise flat-water kayak trip into a rough-water adventure. Utilizing their skills and resources, they partnered to tow each other back to shore safely. However, there was no pride lost among this group, they will tell you that they completed their mission despite the challenging weather.

The ELMACC also provides a day camp program for youth in grades K-4. This year's enrollment to the "Kid's Club" included 51 boys and girls, 11 of which will be entering 5th grade next year. With only 1 of the 2008 Adventure Crew members "aging out" to enter high school, optimistically, I anticipate our enrollment will double next summer. We will continue to create community partnerships and build our Adventure Crew equipment to support those numbers.

As apart of this camp's evaluation process, the Adventure Crew campers and their leaders spent time reflecting on the most memorable and enjoyable experiences. During this "verbal survey", overnight camping and kayaking ranked among the

highest. Campers responded well when given the opportunity to explore sites unseen or experience new activities. Some of their reported favorite trips were:

- Loon counting in Pittsburgh, NH
- Rock of Ages, Barre, VT.
- Searsburg Wind Farm, Searsburg, VT.
- Winchester Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Winchester, NH
- Westover Air Force Base, Westover, Mass.
- Rock climbing at the YMCA, Keene, NH
- Kayaking Wilson Pond, Swanzey, NH

The ELMMCC continues its efforts with creative new programming for the youth of Winchester and beyond. Much of this initiative's success will be best measured by the continued participation of this year's campers into other programs associated with the ELMMCC and in their return for Adventure Crew 2009.

Information about next year's program will be distributed through other programs offered at the ELMMCC; local youth service agencies, the local school, civic and social clubs, the ACCESS program, local newspapers and semi annual newsletters.