



Muddy Sneakers
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Adult	Qty ____	<input type="checkbox"/> Pistachio	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow
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*Cost includes tax and shipping

Become A Community Sponsor

Muddy Sneakers invites its supporters to join in a new membership campaign. With ever-increasing school interest, Muddy Sneakers seeks to develop a dedicated support base and we need your help!

Please visit our website
www.muddysneakers.org and see how you can become a Community Sponsor

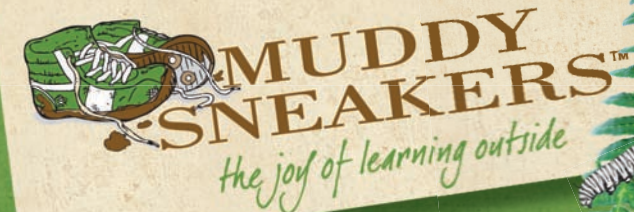


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Pathways

notes from the field

SPRING/SUMMER 2012



MUDDY SNEAKERS WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are excited to announce that Muddy Sneakers has a new executive director! Ryan Olson took over as Executive Director in January of 2012. Ryan brings a great deal of experience to the position, most recently working with The Nature Conservancy in Charleston, SC as Assistant Director of Land Protection. Ryan has a Bachelor's Degree from The University of the South and a Juris Doctorate from the Charleston School of Law. He believes that one of the primary

focuses of the modern environmental movement should be on the disconnect between today's youth and the natural world.

Before returning to the Southeast, Ryan traveled extensively including time spent in New Zealand and Colorado. His love of Western North Carolina was founded at an early age through summers spent with grandparents in Franklin, NC and as a camper at Falling Creek and Gynn Valley



camp near Brevard. He now resides in Pisgah Forest with his wife Maria and their two daughters Anderson and Clara. The family enjoys spending as much time as possible in the outdoors biking, hiking, climbing, and exploring all that WNC has to offer.

New Science Curriculum for Fall 2012

Muddy Sneakers will be saying a fond farewell to a few good friends next fall. Due to changes in the North Carolina Essential Standards for fifth grade science, familiar expedition topics ranging from Simple Machines to Maps and Landforms will no longer be part of our curriculum. But with those departures comes an exciting opportunity to take a fresh look at our remaining learning expeditions, such as Weather, and to welcome new topics like Matter and Energy.

For the past several months, a team of Muddy Sneakers staff and field instructors have been working diligently to revise our curriculum. The process of researching and writing the new topics has been a wonderful creative exercise. For example, how do we teach students about convection, conduction, and radiation outdoors? Let them heat water on a camp stove and make pine needle tea... and then build insulating shelters out of natural materials to see who can keep the tea warmest for 10 minutes!

With the program entering its fifth year, we now have a wealth of teaching experience among our field instructors, many of whom have developed novel and creative ways of teaching that have yet to be captured by our written curriculum. Our new curriculum will reflect these many wonderful, individual innovations - whether intentional or serendipitous!

Before the new curriculum is finalized, it will be sent for review to teachers and administrators in each school district. We intend for this curriculum development to be the beginning of an ongoing process of refinement, ensuring that our teaching continually offers students the highest possible level of instruction when they join us for a Muddy Sneakers expedition!

— Ben Nelson, Field Instructor



Success By The Numbers...

In addition to the anecdotal evidence we have seen for years, we are proud to now announce that after four years of programming, participating schools' 5th grade **EOG science scores have increased an average of 25 % after their first season of participating in Muddy Sneakers!** Following that first year of elevated scores, most of our schools have seen continued, incremental increases. Currently, all of our schools are scoring above the state average with many scoring in the high 80th – low 90th percentile, 15 -20 % above the state average in science. While we are very proud of this success, we must also recognize the incredible support of our partnering schools and the tireless work of their 5th grade teachers!

Director's Report

With the recent beautiful weather and long sunny days, we hope children are playing outdoors, exploring the woods and rivers, (possibly applying what they learned in Muddy Sneakers) and genuinely embracing the blissful and fleeting days of summer. The cool air this morning in Brevard makes me think summer is taking its time even though July is upon us and we are only a couple of months away from Muddy Sneakers' fifth year in operation. It's hard to believe that our first class of 5th graders are now in high school and since our inception, we have worked with over 4,000 students across four counties and five school districts. In that time, we have evolved into a leading environmental education organization addressing not only the needs for improvement in public school science but also the larger goal of awakening in children a deeply felt connection with the natural world.

Instructors will not return until late August but the office remains busier than ever as we prepare for our most active season of programming to date. In January, I took over the role of Executive Director and I'm pleased to say we have already made significant strides towards moving the organization in a more sustainable direction while positioning the program to grow and serve more students in our region and beyond. Please take



time to read about our student's academic successes and our many other significant developments. I am very excited about the next chapter of Muddy Sneakers, I believe you will be too!

Finally, and with great excitement, we announce our first-ever membership offering titled the **Muddy Sneakers "Community Sponsor" program.**

Please see the membership letter inside this newsletter or visit our website for more information on how you can become a Sponsor!

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions, comments, or would

just like to learn more about the program. We always welcome our supporters to join us in the field on a Muddy Sneakers "learning expedition" to see the power of experiential education firsthand. After a day with our naturalists, we think you'll be as enthusiastic as we are to ensure future generations understand their connection to nature and subsequently respect and protect all that it offers.



Significant developments over the last six months ...



- 100% re-enrollment by all 2011-2012 participating schools along with full financial commitment (schools contribute one third of the program costs).
- Overhauled our curriculum to reflect the comprehensive changes being made to NC public school curriculum beginning fall 2012
- Standardized our programming to ensure each school participates in a minimum of six expeditions with the

option of doing as many as ten. Two of these expeditions will take place in the schoolyard and the remainder will occur off site at nearby, natural areas

- Developed our first pre-and post test as an additional means of measurement beyond end-of-grade (EOG) score evaluation

- Increase in the number of participating schools from 13 to 15, making 2012-2013 our largest season of programming to date. We are excited to announce Francine Delany New School for Children in Buncombe County will join us for the first time and returning to the program will be Mountain Community School in Henderson County; In 2011-2012 Muddy Sneakers worked with roughly 25% of the elementary schools in the four-county program area and it is the organization's goal to be working with 50% of those schools in the next five years

- Secured critical grant funds from the Glass Foundation that will allow us to purchase a second staff vehicle and update/duplicate all expedition materials with the intention of establishing a second supply hub based out of Buncombe County to better serve the northern and eastern portions of our program area; this will allow us to serve more than one school on any given day, a logistical challenge we were previously unable to address

- Moved into our new office space upstairs at 44 West Jordan St. in downtown Brevard, NC (units #2 and 3) — Please come visit if you're in the area!

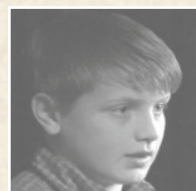


Muddy Sneakers Students Featured at TEDx!

We were pleased to have two students represent Muddy Sneakers at the TEDx Katuah 2011 event. Claire Griffin, a sixth grade student at Brevard Middle School and Weston Whitmore, a sixth grade student at Rosman Middle School shared their Muddy Sneaker experiences at the TEDx Katuah event held at the Pisgah Astronomical Research Institute in Rosman on November 5th, 2011. TEDx Katuah 2011 was an interactive, multi-media event where science, beauty, and imagination collided to expand perceptions and dissolve barriers. Presenters and attendees exchanged ideas, visions, and passions and carried them back into communities to spark positive change.



Claire Griffin



Wes Whitmore

Claire shared how she used her five senses to learn science and how Muddy Sneakers helped her learn to love science and to strengthen her problem solving skills. Weston shared slides of our beautiful area and told the audience about his experience and his participation in the Muddy Sneakers Summer Camp hosted by the Southern Highlands Reserve. See our website for a link to the students' presentation which can also be found on YouTube.

TED ideas worth spreading

TED is a non-profit organization devoted to ideas that are worth spreading. It began as a four day conference in California 25 years ago and has grown to support world changing ideas with multiple initiatives. TED speakers have included many well-known figures word-wide including Bill Gates, Al Gore, Sir Richard Branson, and Jane Goodall to name a few.

- Gloria Clouse, Muddy Sneakers Board President