SCI Flint Supports

Our chapter recently provided the funding to Rolland Warner Middle School in Lapeer for additional beekeeper's clothing. Beekeeping is part of their Outdoor Education Class and there is a Bee Club as well which meets after school. Honey bees are an important part of the environment and the beekeeping activity teaches the young people how insects and plants are interrelated. It also shows how we as humans can practice conservation through the wise use of a sustainable natural resource. The hives are protected, the bees flourish, the correct amount of honey is taken for human consumption leaving enough for the bees to survive over the winter so the process can begin again in the spring. Along with beekeeping the Outdoor Class also has a segment on maple syrup production. Wise conservation is taught here as well. The maple trees are tapped in a way that collects the sap but does not harm or kill the trees.

Mr. Chris Prill is the teacher responsible for this remarkable outdoor program. Chris has been teaching in Lapeer for 17 years. He has spent the last 6 of those years building the Outdoor Education Class into what it is today which along with beekeeping includes many other important outdoor activities and skills. Chris is a 2015 alumni of the SCI American Wilderness Leadership School (AWLS) in Jackson Wyoming and some of the concepts he learned there are part of the current curriculum. These include archery, survival skills, and navigation with both compass and GPS. The 6th and 7th grade students who attend Mr. Prill's class come away knowing how to safely handle archery equipment and how to recognize their own coordinates from an app on a cell phone that they can then use to get help if needed! Outdoor Education students can build a shelter in the woods and start a fire. They learn how to boil water and why this is important because the bacteria in the water is killed and drinking it will not make them sick. All important survival skills.

Students love Mr. Prill's class for many reasons. Number one is probably because they get to spend time outside the classroom in a natural environment which is a welcome change from lectures and video presentations. They hate rainy days which prevents this and keeps them in their seats. When George Peterman and I toured Rolland Warner Middle School it was obvious the students there respected and admired Mr. Prill. The smiles on their faces when they talked to him indicated that there was a special connection that they might not have had with any other teacher. Sometimes all it takes is one special teacher to point a young person in the right direction which will have an impact on the rest of their lives.

When we talked to Chris Prill we learned that he is not done improving and expanding the Outdoor Education Class or the Bee and Archery Clubs which meet after school.

Lapeer Middle School

The number of students participating in these activities is expected to more than double from 90 to over 200 in the next two years and he plans to add content to what is being taught as well. Rolland Warner Middle School is fortunate because it has 20 plus acres of woods and fields as part of the school grounds so there is room to do even more in the outdoors. Chris has plans to add a 3-D archery course in the future and take part of the archery activities outside. This will allow the students to practice their skills in a realistic natural environment. The school's acreage also abounds in wild turkeys and he wants to use them to teach his students a little about wildlife and habitat to enhance their outdoor experience. If you are like me you probably wish you would have had a teacher like Mr. Prill!

As SCI members we are proud to support the teaching at Rolland Warner Middle School. The students that attend Chris Prill's classes gain important insights into the natural world. If they live in the city and their parents are not outdoor people this may be their only exposure to the things we experience all the time and take for granted. If our young people lack an appreciation of the natural world and an understanding of conservation the prospects for hunters in the future is grim.

When we asked for some feedback from Chris Prill about his various programs he expressed his deep gratitude for our donation and support. The funding for the equipment needed in special activities like beekeeping, archery, and maple syrup collection comes from organizations like Flint SCI. Without our help these things would not be there to enrich the learning of his students and he wanted to thank us. Our response was to say "Chris, without you the Outdoor Education Class and Clubs would not exist so, Thank You!

For more information about the American Wilderness Leadership School and other programs SCI Flint has for schools and teachers please contact Carl Griffin, Education Director, SCI Flint. 248-770-9983.