

## Partner Profile

### *The Conservation Foundation*

*Judy Fitchett; The Conservation Foundation*

The mission of The Conservation Foundation (TCF) focuses on preserving and protecting natural lands, and improving rivers and watersheds. The Conservation Foundation's commitment to educating and involving young people in stewardship of local areas began with establishing a stream monitoring program for schools in DuPage County in 1991. So it was a natural fit (pun intended) when the Mighty Acorns stewardship program expanded to areas outside of Chicago in 1997. Since then, The Conservation Foundation has worked with over 300 students in 13 classes from Pioneer and Currier Schools in West Chicago to foster the connection between the students and the land. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has been an important partner in the Mighty Acorns Program by providing forest preserve sites for the students to help restore. TCF staff became stewards of the area of the forest preserve behind Currier School two years ago. Currier School borders Blackwell Forest Preserve and, since 2002, Mighty Acorns participants have been able to be stewards right in their own backyard! The DuPage Department of Development & Environmental Concerns also provides some support for Mighty Acorns and has approved the program for NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Standards) Phase II compliance in DuPage County. NPDES Phase II regulations require education and involvement of the community in stormwater pollution reduction. Caring for the watershed and improving the land helps realize this goal.



Judy Fitchett, Director of Education and Outreach, visits each classroom before every field trip to present the key concept activity. Eight volunteers also help guide the 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the field and exploration activities. In addition to regular volunteers, two local corporations, Northwestern Flavors and Computer Associates, support our Mighty Acorns programs by allowing several employees release time to volunteer with the program. One aspect of the program that Judy particularly likes is the opportunity to work with many students over the course of three years to nurture their connection with the environment.

Founded in 1972, The Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit land and watershed protection organization currently active in DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will counties. Their offices are located on the 60-acre McDonald Farm in Naperville. The farm has been preserved through a conservation easement and is used for agriculture, conservation and education. The cropland is leased to the Green Earth Institute, an organic produce operation. McDonald Farm also features a demonstration water garden, butterfly garden and organic kid's garden. McDonald Farm is open during business hours and for special events. Visit their website at [www.theconservationfoundation.org](http://www.theconservationfoundation.org) for more information about activities, programs and events.

## Journaling Tips

- The Favorite Thing Approach.

Start with the thing that you really enjoy knowing a lot about and write about it – use the “hot pen” technique – all the ink will melt out into one big blot: write anything that comes into your head, in any order, with no concern about spelling, sentences etc., for three minutes. After three minutes compare what you have written to any natural “wild” thing, a river, a mountain, a leaf, a coyote chasing its tail. Then draw an abstract little sketch, or find a photo, or add some color.

- The Five Senses Approach.

Find a place where something catches your eye. Sit and observe, use of your five senses, touch, feel, hear, see, and taste. Record your observations and ideas, what did you notice, how did you feel about this place?

- The I Just Don't Feel Creative Approach.

Become the scientist naturalist. Find a piece of anything: a rock, a plant, an animal, a brick, a piece of litter. Describe the item in detail, color, texture, weight, shape, measurements, enough detail that another person could identify, draw or recreate the item that you selected without knowing what it is. After you've recorded; why is it that color, what purpose does the texture serve? If ideas and reflections begin to flow...go for it, record them too. If they don't it's okay, study and learning give insights into many other things. Recording the observations is the important part.

- The Imitate A Mushy-Flowery-Philosophical Poet Approach.

Journals are great places to get a little silly and be creative. Do your version of Shakespeare's “description of a tree.” Imagine yourself to be a minimalist; find five words that describe an object, but don't relate at all to each other, add an illustration. Outline a bunch of things that strike your fancy (hand, leaf, rock, caterpillar) and write a haiku inside it.

## **Journal Activity**

### ***Fill in the Blanks***

*Kelli Parke; Mighty Acorns Assistant*

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and

the date is \_\_\_\_\_.

My \_\_\_\_\_ grade class from \_\_\_\_\_

school went on a Mighty Acorns field trip to

\_\_\_\_\_.

There we visited a \_\_\_\_\_ habitat.

One native plant from Illinois we saw there

was \_\_\_\_\_.

We saw this animal, a \_\_\_\_\_. The

weather was \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite part of my Mighty Acorns trip was

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

I was surprised to learn that

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

During restoration we

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

We played this cool game where

we \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

Overall I had a \_\_\_\_\_ time.

I learned about these three important things;

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_, and

\_\_\_\_\_.



## **Mighty Acorns Calendar**

### ***Midwin National Tallgrass Praire***

Wilmington, IL

Open to the Public June 5, 2004

[www.fs.fed.us/mntp/](http://www.fs.fed.us/mntp/)

### ***Secrets of Spring Ephemerals***

Kane County Forest Preserve District

Join Jack Shouba and learn all about spring

wildflowers. \$12 May 15, 9:00-11:30

Bliss Woods, Sugar Grove, IL

### ***Entice Workshop "Biodiversity 101" FREE***

Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation

Dundee, IL

Designed for educators of grades K-6<sup>th</sup>. Discover Illinois' biodiversity and trace its natural progression through time.

For more information and CPDUs Credit contact : IDNR ENTICE Coordinator at (217)524-4126.

Tuesday June 22 & Wednesday June 23, 2004  
8:00am-12:00pm

### ***"Biodiversity: Variety is a Key to Life" Fair***

Spring Brook Nature Center Anniversary

Itasca, IL Sunday 12:00-5:00 pm, August 29, 2004

David Stokes Speaker 3:00pm-5:00pm

### ***National Interpreters Workshop***

November 16-20, 2004

Grand Rapids, Michigan

[www.interpnet.com/](http://www.interpnet.com/)

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*Thank You!*