

Learning & Having Fun in Our Beautiful Open Space Lands!!

Hi Everyone:

This is one of those visits that was never on my 'Radar Scope', it developed quite by luck, during a visit to Mountain Villa School and Rutherford Hall in Allamuchy, NJ!!

The story begins last Friday late morning, I went to Mountain Villa School to talk with Dr. Seth Cohen, School Superintendent, I wanted to inform him about Warren County Preservation Day to be held at White Lake on May 17th. I specifically wanted to advise him that introduction activities for kayaking was a possible event that day and since Mountain Villa School has done that type of activity during their school year I thought they might want to assist if possible, great way to spread the word about school activities!! Next on my list was Amy Hufnagel, Director for Programs & Development at Rutherford Hall, I always keep in touch with Amy to keep up on all the exciting programs and activities at Rutherford Hall!! Great visit as always, she stated she was also leaving, she was helping out at Frelinghuysen School, an event where the children would be introduced to snow shoes in an outdoor program at the school. Amy had made the arrangements to get the snow shoes AND they would be donated for the event!!

Departing from Rutherford Hall and driving to my home, the words, 'SNOW SHOES' - OPEN SPACE - SCHOOL ACTIVITY started jogging my mind!! Amy always gets involved in interesting events!! Better head over to Frelinghuysen School and check this out!! Maybe, they could use some photos AND I could get a chance to witness students and teachers using Open Space!! I'M OFF!!

Signed in the visitor log, I am speaking to Jane Mostaccio in the school office, learning this event won't happen until after 3:00PM, great news, I can go home and get my hiking boots and proper clothing, it is 23 degrees!!

Our event begins in the science classroom. The children were briefed about what they were going to be doing and reminded how they were expected to behave! The event was to be held in the school's beautiful backyard, a ten acre backyard of woods and farm fields with a great view looking West at the distant mountain, which is a part of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area! After leaving the building all students would get a pair of snow shoes, then they would get a partner and head into the wooded area, each pair would pick a tree to adopt. Each pair would draw a picture of their tree, check the immediate area for wildlife and any signs of wildlife, for example nests, burrows, scat, foot prints etc. I must comment a very well planned event and a very well explained event!!

I will now let my photos depict this educational and fun event!!

Before we start our visit, let me make a couple of observations:

FIRST, I was wondering how these young students would do once they put on the snow shoes??!! I have never used snow shoes, SO, I was kind of expecting the kids to carefully raise each leg and gently place same back on the ground very carefully until they got the feel for the snow shoes. In reality, after the final fastener was fastened and they were given the 'OK'. It was a mad dash to the wooded area, looked to me like these kids were born with and had been walking with snow shoes all their lives!!!!!!

SECONDLY, I was very impressed how the students carried out their assignments, each and every pair had completed all tasks as requested - keep in mind the teachers were not at every tree all the time they moved around to check each tree and there were about twelve pairs of students!! Speaks very highly of both the students and their teachers!!

THIRDLY or LAST BUT NOT LEAST, I was so impressed watching these young students, young students, really enjoying being outdoors!! Really enjoying the opportunity to learn in an outdoor setting!! Look at these photos, kids lying down, gloves off to do their tasks, & SMILING FACES!!! All amid a twenty three degrees setting, with never a peep about its cold, I'm cold etc. To the contrary, you heard them call one another to show what they had discovered and observed at their tree!! Quite a nice break for me from the incessant TV / radio reporting about how cold it is, or from my friends, how cold it is!!! HEY it's Winter in New Jersey!! While looking at these photos, go back a few years and you will see yourselves!!!

In closing I would like to thank my new friends at Frelinghuysen School for giving me this opportunity to share in their Open Space Educational Program and also for allowing me to share that experience with all my email friends as a part of my Open Space Outreach!! I checked with the school about using photos of the students and was advised all parents had signed off and I also forwarded this message for their approval prior to my sending this out as an official Open Space Email.

Enjoy Your Open Space

Charlie Fineran

Director Open Space
Allamuchy Township Environmental Commission – Chairman
Allamuchy Historical Society – President



