

GROW WITH EXTENSION

Science teaches respect for ecosystems



Lloyd Singleton

I still remember fondly that field trip in sixth grade to the local creek, a tributary of the Meramec River south of St. Louis. Our science class had planned the visit for months; we studied the flora and fauna and physical environment that we expected to find to facilitate efficient identification. The yellow bus full of eager youth dressed in boots and blue jeans pulled off the road to a shady spot near a bridge. The teacher, Mrs. Barnard and adult parent chaperones teamed up with each group of three students to assist us in observing and recording what we found. Tadpoles and crawfish, maple trees and birch, jagged granite rock and water-smoothed stones, all noted and mapped on our clipboarded maps with colored pencils. I was fascinated with the science, to see the interactions of all the components viewing this for the first time as an ecological system. There was no waste, only regeneration, support and life. This respect for functioning ecosystems has stuck with me and hopefully helped me become a better contributor to our society.

We have a science opportunity coming up for youth



Gabriella DeSouza teaching science in the field. [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]

ages 10-15 in an upcoming monthly afterschool 4-H program, the 4-H Biology & Environmental Science SPIN club. (SPIN refers to SPecial INterest.) This cool program is led by Gabriella de Souza, a biodiversity lab instructor and M.S. biology candidate at UNC Wilmington. She asks, "have you ever wondered if a tomato a vegetable or

a fruit? Or what kinds of bacteria live on the surface of your cell phone?" This club is designed to engage students in activities using scientific techniques. Students will be provided exciting opportunities to learn more about the world around them. Meetings will include: A Fruit Fiesta - where students learn about tropical plant biology while

sampling exotic fruits; What's A Protist? - by exploring the microscopic world, students will learn about the organisms found in products like toothpaste, sushi, and more. The first meeting will be at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, March 26, in the education building at the Arboretum. To join or for more information, contact Gabriella at Gad7959@

uncw.edu.

For those of us older than 15, we have a little less "sciency" opportunity to study some systems right away. "What Goes Where?" is a free recycling workshop to be held 1:30-3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8, at the Arboretum. The New Hanover County Arboretum and the Coastal Compost

Council will provide residents information, tools and resources to confidently separate recycling, compost and trash and reduce waste at home. The objective of this educational event is to give our residents a clearer understanding of how to maximize waste diversion and work towards lower waste producing homes and businesses. The landfill is a dead end path; recycling and composting are both systems worth supporting and understanding.

The Arboretum is working towards being a low waste campus, and at a waste audit conducted in October of 2019, 107 pounds of waste was collected over four days. Of that, 41 percent by weight could be diverted from the landfill to the compost facility. In March, 2020, compost bins will be alongside recycling containers at the Arboretum and visitors and stakeholders are encouraged to no longer use single use disposable plastics. Join us in this low-waste, systems-supporting approach at your home or place of work.

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