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Streamside Field Day offers 'impactful' environmental education

By CAROLINE EGGERS ceggers@bgdailynews.com 7 hrs ago

About 150 sixth-grade students from St. Joseph Interparochial and Jody Richards Elementary schools will dip their toes into Drakes Creek on Friday to learn about stream chemistry, biology and ecology during Streamside Field Day.

It's also a chance for them to enjoy themselves in nature.

"A tremendous number of these kids have never set foot in a local stream before," said Matt Powell, environmental manager for the city of Bowling Green and an event coordinator.

The city and the Warren County Office of Stormwater Management organize the event with assistance from Western Kentucky University, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Kentucky Division of Water, the Warren County Conservation District, the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Office and other agencies.

Experts from each organization will staff a variety of 25-minute, educational stations at Drakes Creek within Romanza Johnson Park. Groups of two dozen children will rotate through the stations to learn about the different aspects of streams, how human activities affect streams and the various jobs available related to streams.

They'll test the water's temperature, pH and dissolved oxygen levels and discuss basic drinking and wastewater treatment concepts. They'll also learn about soil, agriculture and karst geology.

The students seem to particularly enjoy learning about benthic macroinvertebrates, which are tiny animals living among the stream's sediment, stones and logs. They'll scoop some up and separate them out for identification.

Since it's challenging to teach some ecological concepts in the classroom alone – and they will be studying streams at a desk before the outdoor excursion – the event provides the children with the opportunity to truly (and literally) get immersed in the lessons, according to Powell.

Consider nonpoint source pollution. “For me to put a photograph of that on a board, that's a really hard concept to learn,” Powell said.

But by seeing a Styrofoam cup that could have been tossed on the ground of a school parking lot and carried to the stream by runoff, they're able to create a connection that could help shape ecological consciousness, according to Powell.

Last summer, the General Motors Global Corporate Giving program awarded the city of Bowling Green and the Warren County Office of Stormwater Management \$10,000 for the program, which is divided into fall and spring events.

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Caroline Eggers

News reporter.

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