

# Lands and Waters 2017

It's that time of year again - Lands and Waters' annual letter. That's when I try to cram a busy year into two pages. We have some new programs, some expanded and revised ones, and some new approaches to help us achieve our goals. There's lots to share. So, let's start with these cookies.

## *Our Plates and the Planet*



vegan - no problem.

I first read about the impact of plant and animal agriculture on the planet years ago. Now, the negative impact is well documented. This year we created ***Our Plates and the Planet***, a program with a personal touch, to encourage eating lower on the food chain. We invite interested people to join us for homemade vegan dinners, share information and vegan dishes at events, and serve only vegan dishes to friends, students, and volunteers. While enjoying tasty vegan food, we have an opportunity to discuss the topic. So, if you're interested, please contact us to set up a dinner date.



vegan sugar cookies

## *Tiny Habitats for Tiny Animals*



Students search for tiny animals in the garden

This project was inspired by Fort Belvoir students. When frogs, snails, grasshoppers, and other small animals moved into the new native garden, students began making tiny homes for these newly discovered friends with sticks, leaves, and pebbles. Construction was ongoing. What one class built, the next class removed or remodeled. All the activity made the small residents uneasy. So, we created a building center a safe distance from the garden. Migo de Ocampo built our first tiny habitats structure with space for 16 conservation engineers to work at a time. Students' tiny habitats are not meant to be permanent. The center's goal is to encourage creativity and imagination. Hopefully, our students will continue their wildlife habitat building throughout their lives.



Migo places the structure



Center's Welcome Sign

## *Gardens to Protect Forests and Wetlands*



Healthy Bottomland Forest

If you are lucky enough to explore forests and wetlands, you just might want to protect them. This happened at Ft. Belvoir Elementary. Students in our nature club and the sixth grade studied and explored the forests and wetlands behind their school with us. They observed firsthand a healthy diverse forest with springs and wetlands. They also saw signs of degradation like sediment and trash in the water and deeply eroded creek banks caused by stormwater runoff from their campus. Their solution was to create a rain garden and native garden to reduce runoff. This year with our guidance, students, partners, and volunteers laid the foundations and completed the initial plantings.



Eroded Banks, Fallen Trees  
Signs of degradation



Ecologist Danielle Wynne explains wetland soils during a field trip.



Students give their recess time to help prepare the new native garden.



Exploring the rain garden



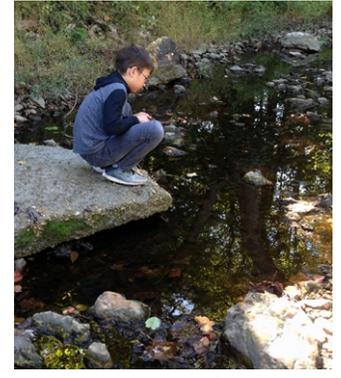
Our club's winning proposal (Caring for Our Watershed Contest) helped with funding.



What are gold fish doing here?

## Follow the Water continues ...

Follow the Water is our extensive, investigative program that focuses on water quality and human impact. It was introduced and piloted at Daniels Run School in 2014. It is now a permanent part of their environmental program. Since then, versions of the program have been presented to over 1,000 students in our area. Enthusiasm for the program remains high among Daniels Run's students and teachers. Students are always eager to explore the stream, observe what is happening along the banks, and sometimes just spend time watching the water.



Taking time to watch the water



See that snake? Did it eat that frog?



It takes patience to find macroinvertebrates.



This was really fun!



Testing for water's pH



Binoculars for the South Pole

## After School Nature Clubs

In 2017, we added new educational activities to our clubs that enhance our exploring and conservation focus. Cindy Wackerbarth and Betsy Stickle joined Kris Unger and me to host our clubs. Cindy blends art, poetry, and nature with *Voices from the Land*, celebrates Hispanic culture with Days of the Dead traditions, and engages students with her Monarch program. Betsy and I have developed and are expanding our ecosystems units. Students learn about their own ecosystem by exploring the natural world on and near their school campus and take virtual trips to experience other ecosystems. This year, they visited the South Pole. The Amazon is next on the travel list. Kris, our best guide for exploration, brings his growing skills to enhance our organic vegetable garden program.



Traditional Days of the Dead Art



Voices from the Land



Voices from the Land

## Partners and Volunteers

This year, we hosted eight volunteer workdays. Volunteer Fairfax and Rebuilding Together helped host, fund, and coordinate volunteer events at two schools. Metro Church, Cornell Club, students from GMU (Fraternity and Sorority Service Saturday) and Holmes Run School planted, weeded, mulched, and removed invasives.



Volunteer Fairfax - Daniels Run



Rebuilding Together - Ft. Belvoit Elementary



Holmes Run Middle School



Cornell Club, Carlin Springs School

We have great projects planned for 2018. Please help us continue our work by making a contribution to:

**Lands and Waters, 2909 Charing Cross Rd. #9, Falls Church, VA 22042**

Donate: <http://donate.landsandwaters.org>