

Connecting academics to curiosity & wonder—why nature education is important



Think back to your childhood—did you have a special place in nature that you visited on a regular basis? What did you do in that place? How did it feel to be there? Now, take a moment to think about your own child’s relationship with nature—when do they get to spend time outdoors? What are their special outdoor places? What do they do there? What kind of relationship with nature would you like your child to have?



Numerous research studies show that when young people spend time outdoors they experience lower stress, greater creativity, and that they even become more generous! When learning is taken outdoors, students experience all of these benefits, plus a stronger sense of community, better retention of information, and an increased ability to transfer learning to real-world situations. Being in nature also sparks children’s curiosity, and connects them to their sense of wonder.

Regularly spending time outdoors can feel overwhelming for some families. Extracurricular activities, an increased interest in screens, and concerns about safety limit outdoor access for some families. The good news is, connecting children with nature can be simple. By choosing to send your child to Pioneer Springs you have given them the advantage of being at a school that is intentional about giving young people regular and meaningful outdoor experiences. Additionally, the naturalist Rachel Carson reminds us that all children need to connect with nature are two things: special places and special adults. “If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder,” she writes, “he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.” Where is your child’s special place, and who are their adult nature-guides?

Looking for ways to connect your family with nature? Join Sandy Dixon, our school naturalist, as she hosts a Holistic Tea on September 27 at 9 AM.

Have you read Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods*? What challenges do you as a family face that prevents your children from feeling connected to the natural world? Join other families for tea and pastries as we discuss resources and activities that will help your family on their nature journey!

The Holistic Tea will last about an hour, and will take place in our outdoor amphitheater. Pioneer Springs will provide tea. Please bring a treat to share, a blanket to sit on, and a mug. Young children are welcome to join us. Questions? Email Heidi Magi (heidim@pioneersprings.org) Looking to learn more about Nature Deficit Disorder, and how to overcome it? [Read an interview with Louv here.](#)



IMPORTANT DATES & ITEMS TO NOTE

- 15 Sept-13 Oct: [Annual Campaign](#)
- 26 Sept: 4th grade field trip to Reedy Creek Nature Centre
- 27 Sept: Holistic Tea with Sandy Dixon at 9am
- 29 Sept: Staff Development – NO SCHOOL for students
- 30 Sept: HS progress reports emailed
- 4 Oct: Volunteer Training, 9am & 6pm

Want to get your students involved in fundraising? Here are some ideas...



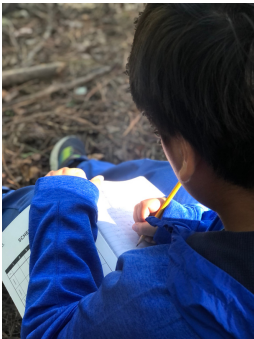
Many Pioneer Springs families love to get their kids involved in fundraising because fundraising teaches valuable life skills including how to communicate with potential donors, handle money, and set goals. By requesting donations from family, friends, and neighbors, students also learn leadership skills, confidence, and the value of giving. WINGS—our parent and family network—collected some ideas for how students can participate in fundraising for the Annual Campaign:

- make a video to share with family and friends ([click here](#) and choose “become a fundraiser” to build your personal online campaign)
- Hold a neighborhood bake sale
- Create crafts to sell to friends and family, or to thank them for their donation:
 - Jewelry
 - Laminated bookmarks incorporating pressed flowers and other natural items
 - Finger Knit garland
 - Homemade dog treats and dog toys
- Host a yard sale if outgrown clothes and toys

How are you encouraging your student to participate in the Annual Campaign? Share your ideas on social media and tag #pioneersprings.

Student voices: 4th grade students zoom-in on nature

What do you notice about the natural world when you spend time outdoors? Ms. G’s fourth grade students use nature journaling to practice observing amazing details that are often overlooked. When Ms. G.’s students nature journal, they “zoom in” on a small area of nature and record what they notice, wonder, and imagine. Junior Z. reported that his favorite discovery this year was a green cocoon with red stripes. An ant carrying pollen enchanted Leilani R., while Neil J. described his fascination with leaf shapes, and how they vary from species to species. Drake N. enjoyed seeing animals including a salamander and box turtle, noting that he enjoys nature journaling because he gets to “spend time in nature, and find things you might not notice when you just walk past.” Ms. G.’s class would like to invite you to give nature journaling a try—choose a comfy spot outdoors, zoom-in on a small area, and see how many wonders you can find! Share your discoveries on social media, #pioneersprings.



2023 Reach for the Trees Schedule

We are excited to invite families to join us on campus for the Reach for the Trees! Please [click here](#) for the schedule!



6th Grade Rescues a Moth

By Michele Rothschild, middle school Explore teacher

Sixth Grade Explore scholars discovered an injured moth while walking across campus. One of its wings had been badly torn. Students placed it in a plastic container to bring to Explore. They were determined to help this critter survive! Upon entering Explore class, we began researching what type of moth it was, what type of habitat it lives in, nutritional requirements, etc.

Scholars discovered it was a Polyphemus moth (*Antheraea polyphemus*). Polyphemus moths are North American members of the Saturniidae family, known as giant silk moths. They also discovered that the moth lives for approximately one week after metamorphosis.

After consulting with Mr. Chris, we decided the moth would be released onto an oak tree in front of the hives to live out the remainder of its life in nature, as it was meant to be! Oak trees are Polyphemus moths' habitat and food source. We watched as it climbed happily up the tree!

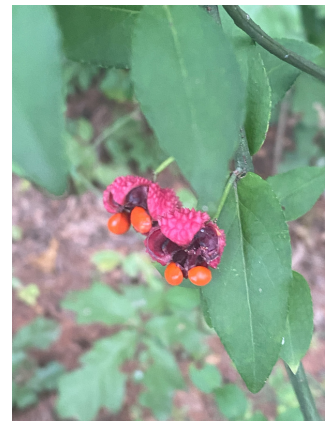


Meet Hearts-a-Burtsin', a unique looking plant that attracts wildlife and has a Folklore and Fairytale Festival connection



If you're exploring the woods this weekend, be on the lookout for Hearts-a-Burtsin' (*Euonymus americanus*), a unique looking shrub that is native to the Piedmont. In the fall Hearts-a-Burtsin' shrubs grow fruits that resemble strawberries that pop open to reveal bright red fruit. Wildlife including deer, rabbits, and turkeys enjoy the berries. The high fat content of the berries make them a nutritious food source for songbirds.

Spindle trees (*Euonymus europaeus*), the European cousin of Hearts-a-Burtsin', have particularly hard wood that was used in the past to make spindles for spinning wheels. The wood was once falsely believed to be so toxic that a single prick from the wood would cause a person to fall into a coma, reminiscent of the story of Sleeping Beauty. If you encounter one of these strange plants—or decide to plant one in your yard—share it with our community on social media using the hashtag #pioneersprings.



Classroom Happenings

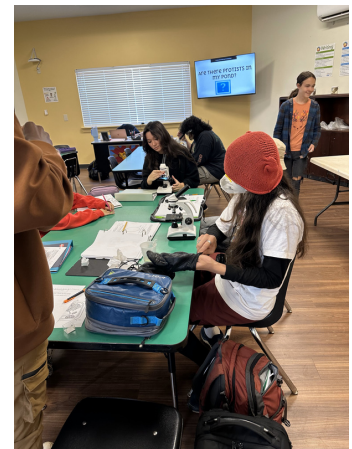


David Flemming, author of Who's Your Founding Father visited the 10th grade Green Humanities Community in Action class to talk about the history of the MecDec. Students asked him many insightful questions, including a question about how John Lockes' ideas influence Thomas Jefferson-Mr. Adam is researching the answer.



2nd Grade taking care of our campus by cleaning the Sound Garden.

High School Honors Biology students collected pond water and used microscopes to search for protists using microscopes. They found amoebas!



Ms. C's 4th grade class learned about animal habitats with a virtual visit to the Australia Zoo. Then, they imagined a new species of animal and created a habitat for it.

Classroom Happenings



A third grader's upcycled outfit out of a raspberry container and an old pillowcase.



A teacher celebrating Spirit Week by dressing like she's going on a hike.



Ms. Jill's class holding Morning Mindfulness at the Croft stage. Note the upcycled hat for Spirit Week.



Showing Pioneer Springs spirit!



We had a very special visitor for Spirit Week!



A fifth grade student strikes a pose in her upcycled paper bag skirt.