



1227 CR,25, Canton, NY 13617

(315)379-9474

steve@littleriverschool.org

www.littleriverschool.org

LITTLE RIVER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Little River News

Into the Woods



Heather, Maya, and Mina's self built leaf fort

According to the CDC, recess improves memory, concentration and reduces disruptive behavior in the classroom. It also gives students space to practice negotiation, sharing, collaboration and conflict resolution.

While outdoor time has always been an important part of the Little River day, this year's Middles are really making the most of it. For the last few weeks they've been collaborating with each other to make houses, villages, businesses and other creations in the woods. The Middles recently wrote about their outdoor activities to give us a glimpse into their world.

The Old Fashioned Game

by Heather, Enzo, Remi, Lauren, and Ira

After we came back from the field trip to Farmer Boy's homestead, we were inspired to make up a game which we called *The Old Fashioned Game*. We had old fashioned names: Enzo was Jack (father), Heather was Caroline (step-mom), and the children were Barrett (Sam), Ira (Laura), Lauren (Mary) and Remi (Rose.) We had an adorable baby which was just a stick, named Johnny. We had a three room house made of

Continued on page 2

Battle of the Books Champs

Little River had two teams, *The Flaming Phoenixes* (Mina, Gigi, Liam and Emilie) and *The Thinkers* (Zoya, Walden, Max and Fiona), who entered in Canton Free Library's *Battle of the Books*, winning first and second place out of six teams for the 2022-2023 school year. *The Flaming Phoenixes* went on to take first place in the county-wide *Battle of the Books* competition in Gouverneur on May 20th.



The Flaming Phoenixes members raising their winning trophy accompanied by their student coach, Brianna.

New teams are gearing up for another season with repeating competitors Fiona, Max, Mina and Emilie, and a couple of new comers this year, Maya, Heather and Lauren; all being coached, once again, by Brianna. Good luck everyone!

Steve Molnar

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- Democratic School, K-12
- 8:1 Student/Teacher Ratio
- Individualized Curriculum
- Hands-on Learning

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Beep Boop Bop

In August, Aubree, Elena and Nuala participated in a Clarkson University workshop through Student Preparation for Emerging Careers in Computer and Information Technology Initiatives (S.P.E.C.C.I.T.) grant discussing New York State Digital Learning and Literacy Standards. It consisted of a week-long workshop covering the standards and how to implement them and follow up meetings in the Fall and Spring semesters. The teachers completed a two day lesson plan introducing programming utilizing the community room, a taped grid, rubber dots and students and then digital programming on *Code.org*.



Middles and Youngers practicing their programming skills

The students put these lessons to the test early in the school year discovering specific ordered commands are needed for the computer or human “robot” to move through a maze. The students took to these lessons and brought with them background knowledge about robots and programming.

There was discussion throughout the process and students were able to share their knowledge and insights. One student explained, “Programming technology, or even people, is laying a pathway for the robot to move.” Another reflected, “When we were not specific with our commands, it does not work. We need trial and error.”

During the Day 2 lesson plan, students were able to put their understanding of coding to the test and gain new knowledge through an online programming site called *Code.org*. Students worked through the *Hour of Code* activity: *Classic Maze* and were able to become more familiar with *Code.org* as well as practice the commands learned in the previous lesson. Students made the connection between each line of code having a specific outcome, and also debugged their programs when things went awry. One student who had previous coding experience chose to work on a different *Hour of Code* activity. Students enjoyed coding and solving the puzzles. They look forward to more coding practice and exploring new tech from the grant!

Nuala Woods

Into the Woods Continued

sticks. We made tools to peel potatoes, cut food, garden, and hunt for food. Rose was allowed to go shop and hunt by herself because she was older and demanded that her parents give her some freedom.

After the Old Fashioned Game went out of fashion, the woods evolved to modern times, with a Taco Bell, houses, and hotels. Noah does an excellent job describing it:

Taco Bell by Noah

I used to work at a Taco Bell with Liam and Enzo. Liam owned the store, and Enzo owned the land. We made a variety of Mexican food and eventually we even made burgers since Heather kept demanding we did. You could even order a different size of taco. Our biggest order was placed by The Old Fashioned family for a party. They ordered ten super large tacos! We sold our items for pinecones and soon enough we had hundreds. We even expanded and made a drive through, but then one fateful day nobody came to work at Taco Bell anymore. I visit it sometimes now and make free food for people if they want.

But the thriving Taco Bell was not the only activity in the woods. Here Noah

tells us about the rest of the pueblo.

Some of the younger Middles made a walkway to get through the forest by sweeping pine needles away. It was nice. I saw that Heather created a hotel. She invited me to come stay a night at least twice but I declined both offers. Eventually I decided to go check it out. It was kind of just like the castle [an area to the back of the woods] with room service and more. I visited it and saw some people pretending to be cats. They invited me to join so I did, and I named myself Irish Butter. I shared a room with Liam. We had jobs, a TV, and lots of stored food but then we decided to take the stuff from our room to help make the Taco Bell better. We had a whole kitchen and silverware to make the food. We had a variety of food and drinks. Milo contributed a spatula, and then we sold him a small tree to use as his home for 30 pinecones. There were many local businesses that we visited to get the Taco Bell running in the first place. We had to first gain access to the property and pay 40 pinecones per month to keep the property. The store wasn't even in business for a month but I suspect we would make 100-500 pinecones a month if we kept it open.

It was a great place in the forest. There was so much creativity. It was a place I loved until lots of businesses closed. I think the hotel has closed because there

have been a lot less people in the forest lately due to not many big businesses. It may start going back up in popularity soon seeing that I've heard about people making lots of new fancy forts. So I guess we will see what happens but in the meantime I may decide to start a new business by myself.

As Noah alludes to, a new hotspot of activity is emerging: the stream. Maya explains how the stream developed.

El Pueblo del Arroyo by Maya

The stream is a nice place to relax and just enjoy life. But there is much more going on than meets the eye. Mina, Leo and I were having a mid-day excursion at the stream one fine fall day when Heather came down and asked if we wanted to build houses. Mina and I accepted, and we got to work on gathering sticks for the forts. Meanwhile, Leo had an idea to prop some sticks up on a mossy boulder, and shovel dead leaves onto his fort. Our stick fort wasn't going too well, so we started copying Leo. Heather found a tree with lots of black berries on it and I was intrigued. Heather and I became berry pickers, and brought the berries to the half-finished forts for the storage area.

Others came and began building forts too. By now, the stream is becoming a village. Everyone is having a great time building forts and collecting Continued on page 3

Knife... Cutting Board... Cooking!

As we sat down with each Older at curriculum meetings in August, we asked what kind of class they would like to have as an elective. Students offered a variety of ideas, including music, coding, poetry, an extra Spanish period, and even a grammar class. I proposed a cooking class, and all of the students expressed some interest in honing their kitchen skills. During the first week of school we continued to talk about possible electives, and we reached a consensus on cooking, with the idea of trying something else in the spring semester.

Each Monday night I make a trip to the grocery store and come back with about \$50 worth of groceries for the Tuesday afternoon class. So far each week has been built around a theme, and we make three or four recipes around that theme. We have had a salsa day, a salad day, a soup class, a Mexican selection, a day of dips, a session of stir fries, and Halloween treats on Halloween. By the time you read this, we will have tried homemade pasta and sauce, pizza, and cookies.

The Olders divide themselves into three or four groups, depending on how many recipes I have that week.

Sometimes the groups coalesce around a shared desire to make a particular dish, other times they group with their besties. The students came into the class with a range of skills. Some knew slicing was different from dicing, others had never used a hand-cranked can opener. As in many hands-on classes, I give a few instructions and then get out of the way. More experienced cooks help beginners interpret recipes, and I offer advice if I see something going wrong or if I see a safety problem.

One way to look at the success of a cooking class is to consider the products. The students produced delicious salsas, (including a pineapple salsa that surprised the cooks), attractive and flavorful vegetarian enchiladas, an ugly, but yummy batch of queso, and a surprise hit with a rich and flavorful black bean dip (almost equal parts black beans and cream cheese). The Halloween class produced wonderful pumpkin bars and some very impressive chocolate bark. There have been some less impressive results as well. We ran out of time on soup day, so the spicy potato-onion soup had nearly raw, crunchy potatoes. Somehow the buckeyes ended up with a cup



Little River Olders, Lidija, Brianna, and Max, serving up enchiladas

of butter in the batter rather than the five tablespoons the recipe required (too soft to roll into balls, and too rich to eat). I also have a hunch that someone spilled the salt in the guacamole, but I can't prove it.

Overall the cooking class has been a hit with the students. They look forward to Tuesday afternoons, and enjoy the process of cooking even if they don't end up liking the product. It has also been a hit with the staff, because our staff meetings are after school on Tuesdays, and we feast on the leftovers!

Into the Woods continued

Leon Sawyko

moss and berries. Leo's fort is done, and he is having the time of his life helping his friends build and forage. The stream is an overall nice and relaxing place to be.

Stream Forts

by Lauren

Down at the stream, Remi, Ira, and I are building a fort. When Remi grabbed a handful of leaves, she tripped and hit the structure. It collapsed, and we stared at the sticks and leaves piled on the ground. We started sharing ideas about how we should build it again. Remi had the idea that we all just did something we wanted and each of us could only say "Maybe we shouldn't do that" once. If we all agreed we shouldn't do something, we just didn't, obviously. It only took us one break to do about half of the fort. I am grateful for Remi's idea and that it looks so good already.

Heather adds: *Barrett collects cool rocks to give to Leo as rent to live in the house. Enzo sometimes comes down to*

help collect moss for insulation. I also go up to pueblo del patio de recreo [playground] to sell berries for wood so that Maya and Mina can have more building materials. All I need is someone who can climb the berry tree and grab the branch with the most berries. I can't climb trees so I was thinking about asking Remi, Ira, and Lauren to come help. It may seem simple but working at el pueblo del arroyo is very hard. You have to contribute or you might not have a house or food. It also means that you won't be able to hear the bell very well so you might be late to class. I don't like to be late but our village means everything to me. It truly is a magical place.

Several of the Middles also wrote about how important free time is for their socializing and emotional well-being. Enzo wrote, "I love hanging out with Barrett, my relationship is not perfect with everybody at the school but I can manage it. The stream is beautiful, with the sounds that can just make me go with the flow."

Emilie poignantly adds, "Recently

break has been fun. I'll go to the stream or castle with my friends. I like to have long conversations with them. Sometimes during break I'll go down to the stream and write a story or draw. It calms me down."

Ella adds, "My favorite part about break is probably just being able to connect with my friends. Also this part of the school day makes up most of my social life. At break is where me and my friends think of all the awesomest sleep overs we are gonna have! I realized that without this time I would probably be extremely bored and isolated. Recess is one of the most important things in the school day."

Elena Pignone

To My Dearest Little River Family,

Today I complete my last edit of the Little River News. I have had the privilege of picking the best photos and reading the articles our devoted teachers, parents, and students put out every season before any other eyes for many years.

I look forward to seeing what great things are to come. Here's to many more adventures and the articles to draw you in.

*Take Care,
Aubree Keese*

Thank You

Nick Colcagn and **Fritz Neubouer** from SLU's Community Based Learning program for working with the Middles; **Maren Wolfe** for volunteering with the Middles; **Doug George** for a donation of books on indigenous people; **Rebecca Pickens** for donation of curriculum materials; **Mary Jones** and **Kate Favaro** from Hospice for their help and guidance as we sorted through grief; **Brianne Borden**, **Lauren Becker**, **Charles Guy**, **Christopher Hernacki**, and **Luke Spence** for the **Potsdam Brass Quintet** performance; **Len Mackey** and **Bomba Ferrra** for drum and dance instruction and performance; **Dulli Tengeler** for working with Youngers and Middles in the garden; **Bill Porter** for lawn mowing throughout the summer and fall; **Seth Coates** for weed whacking; **Elise Franck** for a presentation to the Olders on archeology and Greek sites; and **Priscilla and Jeffrey Feld** for teaching and making baskets with the Middles.



In loving memory of Thorn Wolfe-Kedar

2006-2023



*Eevee
By Gigi*

What I am doing at the stream by Barrett Hall

*I am listening to the sounds of the stream
And walking around in the woods,
Admiring the beauty around me.
And building things in the trees with Mina and
Maya.
This break I played with my friend Enzo
And I climbed a tree
And went to the enchanted lake.*

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