

# EECO Virtual Annual Conference 2021

**Thursday, April 15**

## **Nature Based Early Childhood Education**

### **10:00-10:30 Keynote: Uncharted Path: Nature Preschools**

Bev Walborn, Senior Naturalist, Lorain County Metro Parks – **Brenda Host**

Are you curious about preschools using the outdoors as their classroom? How long have Nature Preschools been operating in the US and Ohio? Why is this nature preschool movement important to you? These questions and more will be answered as Bev shares the history of nature preschools, how nature preschools are growing in Ohio and what this means for environmental educators, nature centers, schools, parks and you!

### **Session 1: 10:45-11:45am**

#### **1.1 Bev Walborn, Lorain County Metro Parks (audience=informal ed, naturalists, etc.) Sheila Host**

##### **From Polliwog Preschoolers to Forest Kindergarteners –**

Have you seen an increase in the number of preschoolers coming to your park and programs? We'll delve into child development to learn what makes these Polliwog Preschoolers tick then explore age appropriate ideas for connecting our youngest park visitors to our natural world.

#### **1.2 Meredith Florkey, Ohio Naturally in Dayton, OH (audience=formal and informal educators) Josh Host**

##### **Sticks and stones-how to work with children who engage in weapon and big body play outside**

Children are often drawn to sticks, rocks, shooting activities and big body play. This training will engage participants in discovering the developmental nature and value of these behaviors. We'll review NAEYC recommendations about active outdoor play and ways to say yes to these behaviors and items in a classroom setting. Teacher perspectives will be examined and we'll discuss how working outdoors with children and finding ways to be responsive to the natural behavior and pivot those to enhance learning.

### **Session 2: 12:30-1:30pm**

#### **2.1 Tad Liechty, Ashley Kramer & Julia Robinson, Hefner Museum of Natural History, MU - Here's to You! Puppet Plays,**

##### **Nature and Anti-bias Education (audience=formal and informal educators) Julie Host**

##### **Here's to You Thursday, April 15, 12:30-1:30pm EST**

Meet Tiny Turtle, Racy Rabbit, Bernard Beaver and other animal friends as they explore and navigate fundamental life lessons. Session members will learn how to use popular children's literature to develop anti-bias puppet shows for the very young that develop positive social identities, promote caring, respectful language and relationships, recognize that unfairness is hurtful, and encourage children to stand up for oneself and others. They will also receive a bibliography of books that can inspire the next puppet play in their anti-bias curriculum.

#### **2.2 Carol Juergemeier, Play and Prep Preschool in Solon, Ohio (audience=formal educators) Jen E Host**

##### **Nurturing Nature: How a Preschool Built a Learning Garden and Shifted Attitudes about Outdoor Education.**

The two primary objectives are to tell the story of how our traditional state licensed preschool program created a managed outdoor space primarily from donated, found and grant supported materials. The emphasis is on the fact that it took several years and happened through the support of various community partners from teachers, parents, scout troops, local businesses,

and grants. A working master plan helped us keep focus. Participants will be given time to brainstorm who their local partners are and to initiate a master plan.

The second objective is to share how we started by offering a one morning a week outdoor class in this space. This class now fills within the first weeks of registration and we have added a three day a week outdoor class. All classes get out to the Learning Garden each week. This approach has allowed us to shift attitudes of teachers and parents who would not have chosen to have students spend time outdoors throughout the year and in all kinds of weather.

### **Session 3: 2:00-3:00**

#### **3.1 Sarah Esala, Youth Library Associate in Central Ohio - Cultivating Belonging in Nature Through Picture Books - Amanda Host**

The stories we tell matter. When we showcase books that reflect Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI), we offer all kids a glimpse into a world where someone like them can explore, play and grow, inspiring real-life outdoor adventures and building important connections with nature. We'll talk about the importance of representation in early childhood literature, resources to grow your "JEDI" collection, and share our favorite nature-based picture books.

#### **3.2 Meredith Florkey, [Ohio Naturally](#) in Dayton, OH (audience=formal educators or informal who are interested in weaving more standards into programming) Early Childhood Development and Learning -online Lynn Host**

In this hands-on training, participants will learn about how early childhood education and environmental education intersect. Theory and practice will be discussed. Natural items will be used to create quick mini lessons in each academic and social emotional area of instruction for preschool ages. Participants will be able to identify how nature can be used as a part of curriculum to achieve all areas (Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Emotional Learning, Cognitive Domains, Approaches toward Learning, Physical, and Motor Development) of instruction. The group will have discussion regarding being prepared for different types of encounters in the field and how to turn them into lessons that support development and learning with the preschool age range in mind.

#### **Panel Discussion: 3:15-4:15 Q & A with Bev, Meredith, Pam, and other presenters-as able. Amanda Host**

**Bev Walborn**, an experienced naturalist who successfully brought a licensed nature preschool program to Cleveland Metroparks.

**Meredith Florkey**, a veteran preschool teacher who led a team to create a licensed and 3 star quality nature based preschool at an educational farm in Dayton

**Pam Perrino**, an experienced early childhood educator, professor, and advocate.

#### **Is a Licensed Nature Based Preschool Right for my Nature Center or Park Department?**

Join a team of seasoned professionals who have founded and successfully operated licensed nature based preschools in Ohio discuss how this avenue of placed based environmental education may be right for your team!

Topics that will be covered are:

- What defines a nature preschool?
- The Why: Environmental, Financial, Mission-based reasons
- Benefits of licensing your preschool program
- State agencies & acronyms: Ohio Early Childhood Education, Nature
- Licensed spaces & Outdoor Playspaces
- Steps to Consider and the People
- Q&A

## 4:30-5:30pm Large Group Session

Jason Hamzy, [Little Schoolhouse in the Woods](#) (audience=formal educators and nature based educators) Brenda Host

Outdoor classrooms and activities require a heightened level of supervision in order to keep participants safe. Besides First Aid-CPR certification, outdoor educators should be able to safely serve snacks, maintain and monitor fires, and keep students safe and comfortable in a wide range of environments. Course participants will learn strategies, policies and protocols to follow and teach during sessions in the woods. Hiking, eating and staying warm are all fun ways to enjoy environmental education, but safety should always be a major priority.

## Friday, April 16

### Virtual Field Trips 9:30-10:30am

#### VFT1- Dipping into Vernal Pools Lynn Host

- Ohio Wetlands Association, Ray Stewart, Mark Dilley, and Jenny Adkins
- Explore life in a vernal pool as it changes over time.

#### VFT2- Foraging in the spring forest Joe Host

- Rural Action, Joe Brehm and Darcy Higgins
- Hunting for morels and other fungi, edible plants, etc. We will devote part of the time to our lessons learned and best practices that we have teased out of the past year of virtual programming

### Career Fair 11am-12:30pm Brenda Host

11:00 AM: Welcome and overview of some environmental careers and programs in Ohio by Carolyn Watkins of Ohio EPA, Sue Wintering of ODNR Division of Forestry, Jen Dennison of ODNR Division of Wildlife and Sheila Cubick of Believe in Ohio.

11:30 AM- 12:30 PM: There will be various Environmental Professionals available to discuss their career pathways.

Jenny Richards: Linda Host

Jenny Adkins: Lynn Host

Greg Orr: Brenda Host

Rachel Easter: Jen E Host

Megan Shortridge: Sheila Host

Kendall Hauer: Julie Host

Adam Regula: Josh D Host

### Workshops 1pm-3pm Linda Host: Topic: EECO Guidelines Workshop

#### W1- Getting to Environmental Literacy – NAAEE's *K-12 Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence*- Bora Simmons

Are you interested in how environmental literacy develops across grade levels? Come and join us for an **exploration of NAAEE's *K-12 Environmental Education: Guidelines for Excellence***. Part of the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education, this set of guidelines was developed to support state and local environmental education efforts by setting expectations for performance and achievement in grades 4, 8, and 12. Through a series of exercises, you will dig into the definition of

environmental literacy, gain an overview of the *K-12 EE Guidelines*, and consider how you might use this environmental literacy framework in your own practice.

## **W2- Conservation Adventures Curriculum, Frank Price -Josh Host**

Students will build an understanding of science content and learn scientific techniques taught through the lens of conservation with an emphasis on hands-on, real-world activities. The curriculum will center on wildlife conservation and the outdoor recreational activities that financially support the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, conservation work, shooting sports and boating; and how they directly benefit habitat enhancement and protection, and wildlife management, including game, non-game and endangered species. Students are not required to actually participate in these activities, but rather the lessons relate to these recreational activities.

## **Open Space 4pm-6pm Brenda Host**

What topics would you like to discuss? We will have breakout rooms for various topics.

## **Nature Nerd Trivia and Virtual Campfire 8pm-?**

Join Carrie Elvey and Karrie McAllister from The Wilderness Center for a fun night of trivia and challenges – totally useless points will be awarded (bonus points will be awarded for funny hats!), fun will be had, drinks may be drunk. We will attempt a virtual fire pit! 😊

## **Saturday, April 17**

### **Opening Session 8:30am – Welcome and housekeeping notes:**

### **Session 1: 9 – 10 am**

#### **1.1 If you plant it they will come. - Chris Kline, Butterfly Ridge Bill Host**

At a time when butterfly populations throughout the country are taking a nose-dive, one organization has successfully turned the tables. At Butterfly Ridge, through strategic planting, habitat alteration, and structured data collection, we have quadrupled the size of our resident butterfly population. Our ideas can be easily replicated in the schoolyard, municipal park, or residential lot. Please come and steal our ideas!

#### **1.2 Using Shadow Puppets to Teach Environmental Concepts – Linda Sigismondi, University of Rio Grande Jen E Host**

Looking for a way to combine art, science and even some engineering for a STEAM project? Shadow puppetry is a fun and inexpensive way to do so. Participants in this workshop will receive templates for several nature-related shadow puppets. Construction methods will be demonstrated from very simple puppets that can be made by elementary students to more advanced puppets that can be made by older students. The use of these puppets in environmentally-themed shows will be demonstrated and discussed. Willing participants will have the opportunity to demonstrate some of the puppets they make.

#### **1.3 Equity in Education – The Importance of Utilizing all Stakeholders in Environmental Education- Dave Murduck, Champion**

“Each Child Our Future” is Ohio’s shared plan for ensuring that each student is challenged, prepared, and empowered. Learn how the incorporation of environmental education can be one of the best strategies to assure equity in education.

### **Session 2: 10:30 – 11:30 am**

#### **2.1 Phenology in the Classroom- Suellen Albert, Ridgeway Elementary and Adriane Ruther, Talawanda high School**

## **Amanda Hosting**

We will provide lesson plans and strategies to incorporate the USA National Phenology Network's citizen science program, Nature's Notebook in K-12 classrooms.

### **2.2 i-Tree- Sue Wintering Stephanie Foster-Miller, Project Learning Tree -Lynn Host**

Project Learning Tree's Teaching with i-Tree unit includes three hands-on activities that help middle and high school students discover and analyze the many ecosystem services that trees provide. Students collect and input data using an online tool that calculates the dollar value of the benefits provided by a tree(s). Students apply STEM skills to develop plans to improve the environmental functions that trees provide for school or community, whether urban, suburban, or rural.

### **2.3 Take It Outside! Outdoor Teaching Tips and Tricks in the Time of COVID - Gia Giammarinaro, Cincinnati Park Board and Julie Stubbs, Greatparks of Hamilton County Gwen R Host:**

Now more than ever, the great outdoors is proving to be a great place to learn. Time outside is calming, connecting and provides a break from screen time. Outside is also a safer space to be around others in this strange time of the pandemic. Join us as two long time naturalists share their "greatest hits" of outdoor education tips and tricks. Learn some new tools for getting your students outside safely, so they (and you) can have some fun while they learn! We'll throw in some brand new socially distanced team building activities to make it worth your while.

## **Annual Meeting, Live Auction and Keynote 12 -2 pm**

Keynote: Chris Meyers, founding Director of Project Dragonfly- How Environmental Education will save the world!

Chris Myers will share stories from across Project *Dragonfly's* global network of conservation organizations, communities, instructors, and students to showcase how educators are forging new approaches to healthy coexistence at a scale, pace, and level of ingenuity necessary to face the complex ecological crises of our time.

## **Session 3: 2:30 – 3:30 pm**

### **3.1 Critters on Camera- Adam Zorn, College of Mt Union Bill Host**

Blend biology, technology, geography, and math to present wildlife research as an interdisciplinary program using wildlife cameras, aka trail cameras

### **3.2 Believe in Ohio- Sheila Cubick Linda P Host**

Participants will learn about the free Believe in Ohio STEM and Entrepreneurship program for high school students and develop a STEM Commercialization Plan to bring an environmental product to market.

### **3.3 Living Literature- Ryan Bourgart, OEPA OEE Lynn Host**

We've written about nature/the environment for a long time. This type of literature became more salient in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has continued its subtle influence today. How can approximately 200 years of environmental literature inspire us environmental educators? In this presentation I will discuss messages from John Muir, Gary Snyder, Arne Naess, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Rashad Easley, and more environmental writers. Ponder your relationship with the land by becoming an environmental author and transcribing nature's secrets.

## **Conference Closing Session 4pm-4:30pm**

AHA Moments? College Credit and Evaluation information