

Youth Happenings

Nature Detectives

Resford Rouzer

Canyonlands Field Institute (CFI) and Building Essential Assets through Community and Outreach Network (BEACON) Afterschool Program have teamed up for a second year of hosting “Nature Detectives” club held every Monday at Helen M. Knight Elementary School. Nature Detectives include third through sixth graders led by AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer Sam Wolf and AmeriCorps Environmental Educator Chris Wiewiora. Together they participate in a series of outdoor educational activities created to expand students’ naturalist knowledge of the Colorado Plateau.

At Nature Detectives young students enjoy the combination of physical activity and science lessons facilitated by CFI’s young adult leaders. Sam and Chris present relevant topics, the members engage in learning by play, and afterward they discuss their knowledge gained. This year, Nature Detectives focus on the food web, while last year they studied the local animal and plant life in the Moab area.

“Kids don’t often make connections with different



animals,” Sam says. “The lines are blurred here in Moab between domestic and wild where kids might think that all turkeys live in backyards.” Last year, Sam challenged the Nature Detectives’ preconceived notions of carnivores by leading an activity about a vicious creature who howls at the moon. After students incorrectly guessed a wolf, Sam revealed the creature as a grasshopper mouse.

This year, Chris led the Nature Detectives in a natural resource game. The students made gestures for mule deer (hands up as antlers), grass (hands over bellies), or water (hands over mouths). Then, the students who represented mule deer ran across an open space to pair with one of the resources. If the deer didn’t get a resource, then they turned into one. “It’s critical for kids to know how an animal population spikes or collapses in their habitat,” says Chris. “The kids loved when we added a predator in the cycle. They saw how the system is a food web, not a food chain.”

Nature Detectives includes students of various grades working together. The club establishes learning in a considerate mentoring atmosphere between younger and older students. Fifth grader Rachael Harrison (club name “Lynx”) returned to Nature Detectives after joining as a fourth grader. “I love the chance to explore different information from books and then play outside with my friends,” says Rachael. One of those friends, sixth grader Andrea Ibarra also returned to Nature Detectives this year bringing along her younger sister Mia Ibarra, a third grader. “It’s amazing to welcome members of the same family to also belong as members of Nature Detectives,” says Chris. “We’ve doubled our club’s attendance from last year!”

Nature Detectives expands from the elementary students’ usual indoor classes. BEACON afterschool clubs provide interactive experiences paralleling students’ interests. “Kids who pick Nature Detectives have an affinity for learning in the outdoors,” says Xandra Odland,



BEACON Elementary Programs Coordinator. “I’m always excited to partner with CFI for their high quality learning experiences.” Chris and Sam continue to provide CFI’s mission of inspiring care of wild places and renewal of the human spirit by for BEACON’s Nature Detectives by teaching a deeper sense of place while leading students in enjoying recreation with friends.



Moab Gear Trader Dodgeball Tournament

BEACON Afterschool Program is excited for the 6th annual Moab Gear Trader Dodgeball Tournament – a fundraiser for BEACON presented in partnership with Moab City Recreation. The event is to be held on February 3rd, 2018 at the Grand County Middle School Gym. The tournament is a fun-filled community event that brings together businesses, families, nonprofits, public service groups, and community members for the lively sport of dodgeball. All of the proceeds from this event directly support BEACON’s programs for K-8 students during critical afterschool hours. BEACON serves over 700 (unduplicated) students each year and strives to offer diversified enrichment and academic learning opportunities to Moab’s youth.

This will be the 4th year that Moab Gear Trader title sponsors the event. Owner Marshall Dvorscak is a big supporter, “Moab Gear Trader supports BEACON and its mission because nurturing, educating, and inspiring our children will create a community for everyone. After school, BEACON provides youth with many positive experiences that they otherwise wouldn’t have access too. Besides, throwing balls at each other is normally frowned upon- so make a team, don a costume, and let’s DODGEBALL!”

Previously, the Moab Gear Trader Dodgeball Tournament has had groups such as Moab Charter School, Outward Bound, Grand County EMS, Community Rebuilds, Youth Garden Project, Synergy, Zax Restaurant, and groups



of friends ready to have fun- participate in the event. Teams come up with costumes, fun names, and mottos. This brings a whole new level of entertainment to the event. “It is always fun to see different organizations, businesses, and groups of locals come together, jump on the court to play dodgeball and support BEACON,” says Kaitlin Thomas, BEACON Program Manager.

There is no doubt that the crowd and participants have shown a lot of enthusiasm for the game of dodgeball over the years.

“The Dodgeball Tournament is everyone’s favorite Saturday of the year. It’s been a blast to watch this event grow and take shape. I’m excited to see what this year’s installment has in store, and as always, happy to be along for the ride,” says Patrick Trim, Moab City’s Recreation Assistant, who has been involved with the tournament the past several years.

Teams will compete this year for prizes in the categories of “Best Costumes,” “Overall Winner,” and “Sportsmanship.” BEACON is actively recruiting teams for the upcoming tournament. Registration is \$80 for adult teams, and \$40 for public service groups/non-profits/youth teams. All teams must include at least 1 youth member in up to 8th grade. In addition to the main event, there will be a half time show, refreshments, and a raffle. Everyone is highly encouraged to costume up!

Mark your calendar for this fantastic winter event. Saturday, February 3rd beginning 11:00am @ Grand County Middle School Gym. Admission : \$3/Adults, \$1/Youth, 3 & under/Free. If you are interesting in having a team, visit moabbeacon.net/dodgeball.html or contact Kaitlin Thomas, thomask@grandschools.org or 435-719-4717.

And be sure to mention you read about the Moab Gear Trader Dodgeball Tournament in the *Moab Happenings*.



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