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News from the MCSEEP Director

The winter season is upon us, as there was snowfall on my drive to work today!. The holidays are fast approaching and I have some tips on going green for the holidays—it's easier than you think!

The holidays are a perfect time to remember to care about the environment. Here are some simple tips to give a thoughtful gift and reduce your impact on the environment—every little bit makes a difference:

- If you must have a real tree, make it a live one that can be re-planted when you are finished.
- Bring your own reusable bags as you do your shopping—it saves oil.
- If you need new Christmas lights, buy LED bulbs—they are safer because they stay cool and use far less energy.
- Use alternative forms of wrapping paper such as reusable bags, the comics, a pretty scarf, a kitchen towel that can be a part of the gift—be creative with your wrapping. Don't use wrapping paper—it is not recyclable!
- Use last year's Christmas cards as gift tags.
- Try to buy gifts with as little packaging as possible, saving our natural resources.
- Avoid using paper/Styrofoam plates. Use reusable dinnerware or biodegradable/compostable plates.
- Consider giving a gift in someone else's name by donating to a charity, adopting an animal at the zoo, planting a tree, adopting a acre of rain-forest, etc.
- Give a gift with an environmental purpose that they will really use. Examples would be: eco-friendly clothing/accessories made from sustainable materials; reusable bags and totes; reusable stainless steel and aluminum water bottles; low flow shower heads; or CFL's or LED light bulbs.



The IDNR's Education Section offers educational materials and programs for teachers. Below are a few I thought might be of interest.

Wild Mammals of Illinois Lessons Updated. The lessons from the *Wild Mammals of Illinois* teaching unit from the IDNR have just been revised and posted to the website at:

Current Events



Earth Day in the Parks— Registration Opens January 1, 2011. Get yours students involved with natural resources stewardship through the Earth Day in the Parks program from the IDNR. Participating state parks will offer students the opportunity to get their hands dirty and experience nature as they perform duties such as removing invasive exotic plants, planting native trees and wildflowers and building and installing bird nesting boxes. The list of participating parks and their associated projects will be posted at <http://dnr.state.il.us/education/CLASSRM/EDITPinstruct.htm> in mid-December. Instructions and the application form are also available at that Web address. Applications will be accepted from Jan. 1-Feb. 28, 2011. For more information, contact the IDNR Div. of Education at dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov or 217-524-4126.

ENTICE Workshop Registration. Register soon for ENTICE (Nature Training Institute for Conservation Education) educator workshops from the IDNR. Visit: <https://www.enticeworkshops.com> and enroll now. You won't want to miss the background information, supplemental resources, networking with other educators and opportunity to work with natural resources professionals. CPDU's are available to all ENTICE participants. Upcoming workshops are listed below: Feb. 14-27, 2011, *Schoolyard Wildlife Habitat Development, Online*; Mar. 14-27, 2011, *Illinois Frogs and Toads, Online*; Mar. 25-26, 2011, *The Greater Prairie-chicken, Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, Newton*; Apr. 30, 2011, *Prairie School Gardening, Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe*; May 21, 2011, *Illinois Butterflies, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago*; June 18, 2011, *Identifying Trees and Making Leaf Collections, The Morton Arboretum, Chicago*.

Green Drinks –gathers the first Wednesday of every month upstairs at Duke's Alehouse and Kitchen, 110 N. Main St., Crystal Lake, IL. Come talk about “greening” the future with others. Bring any information about your green products and services to share. For more local green drinks information contact:
The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County at 815-338-0393.

Green Guide –This publication has a wealth of information on where to recycle items, and much more. To get an online version of this guide you can go to:
<http://www.mchenry.edu/recycling/greenguide.pdf>

LESSON LIBRARY

It's been a busy month for the lesson library. We have had the opportunity to present at faculty meetings and have enjoyed speaking with the teachers that will be using our library. Also, we continue to add to our inventory and have purchased several new items.

On our home page under **announcements** is a *featured unit* bullet point. This is our way of letting you know what some of our new items are and also how to combine different resources to create a unit. Not only do we list by number and title each resource, we also include a picture of the items. Hopefully this will give you ideas for your classroom. Remember, if you have an idea for a unit but would like help choosing items from our library inventory, send us an email. We'd be happy to help create a unit custom fit to your needs. We're here for you—please keep us busy! Email: mcseep@co.mchenry.il.us

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http://dnr.state.il.us/education/CLASSRM/wild_mammals/index.htm

January 31 Application Deadline for Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant. Start working on your *Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant* application now. The application must be post-marked by January 31, 2011. This grant provides teachers with the opportunity to receive up to \$500 to take their students on a field trip to study some aspect of Illinois' biodiversity. All funds for this program are donated to the Illinois Conservation Foundation. Major support is provided by the Independence Tube Corporation of Chicago and the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice foundation of Skokie. To access the application form, visit:

<http://dnr.state.il.us/education/CLASSRM/grants.htm>

For more information, contact the IDNR Education Section at:

dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov

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SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT



Harrison School's Environmental Club's 48 members meet every Thursday after school. This is my 15th year as the Environmental Club Advisor. We have always had the school-wide McHenry County Schools Environmental Program lessons, and I was very excited to find out about the new Lesson Library. It is now our hands-down, all-time "Go To" for environmental science resources that we use at each of our meetings.

The club members have learned a lot about ecology and the environment, while having fun with their friends, just by playing some of the games which we borrowed from the Lesson Library. During "Animalopoly" and "Ocean Bingo", they learned about various animals, their habitats, their life habits, as well as their roles within their ecological communities. During games such as "Earthopoly" and "The Green Game", the students learned nothing less than how to save the planet!

We have also taken advantage of some of the DVDs offered by the Lesson Library, notably "The Story of Stuff", "The True Cost of Food", "Human Footprint", and the classic "Dirt: The Movie". Each of these videos gave clear, convincing, and real evidence of the harm and damage caused by radical consumerism, and they all recommended alternative, sustainable, and sensible solutions to those destructive problems. It's no exaggeration to say that both students and adults have been amazed by learning the hidden truth!

After viewing "The True Cost of Food" and "Dirt: The Movie", we decided to spend the winter months planning a vegetable garden which we will plant next spring. We have had a prairie garden for over 15 years, but this will be the first vegetable garden our school has attempted. I look forward to the Lesson Library's article archive and their collections of lesson plans and books to help with this effort. Also their collection of hands-on activities is unmatched, and I plan to use several of those this winter as well.

We at Harrison School are very grateful to MCSEEP and Siemens Industry, Inc. for creating the Lesson Library, and for offering its extensive resources FREE of charge to all of the schools in the county who schedule the annual environmental lessons. We encourage all teachers out there to take advantage of the wide-ranging environmental science resources available from the Lesson Library. You too will be astounded, astonished, and thankful that you did!

**Kevin Click—Harrison Elem. School—Art Teacher,
Environmental Club Advisor, Recycling Coordinator**