

In Wildness is Strength

Don Webb, September 2008

In reflecting about this past summer, in watching children, counselors, parents and friends, I noticed that everyone's eyes were sparking and flushed with pleasure. There was an atmosphere of humble searching together, of honesty and compassion, the cumulative effect through a whole summer in promoting a general feeling of friendliness and good will through camp.

With joy and gladness, children sensed the woods were an enchanted wilderness. With some guidance children discovered the wonders beneath every tree and along the stream, the mystery in every fern and beneath all kinds of mushrooms. Children's ears caught the small sounds in the woods. They delighted in a familiar taste beneath birch bark, in sassafras leaves, and in the drop of sweetness in a honey suckle blossom. They delighted in watching butterflies and hummingbird butterflies suck the nectar from the TA's wildflower garden along the pool. And they, along with counselors, found pleasure in the field's fragrance after a warm rainfall, as they delighted in sitting and singing on the wet field, followed by joyful running and sliding on the grass and mud.

"In wildness is strength," Thoreau wrote. Summer camps here in Monkton have one of the most vital adjuncts to education -- their unspoiled woods and fields.