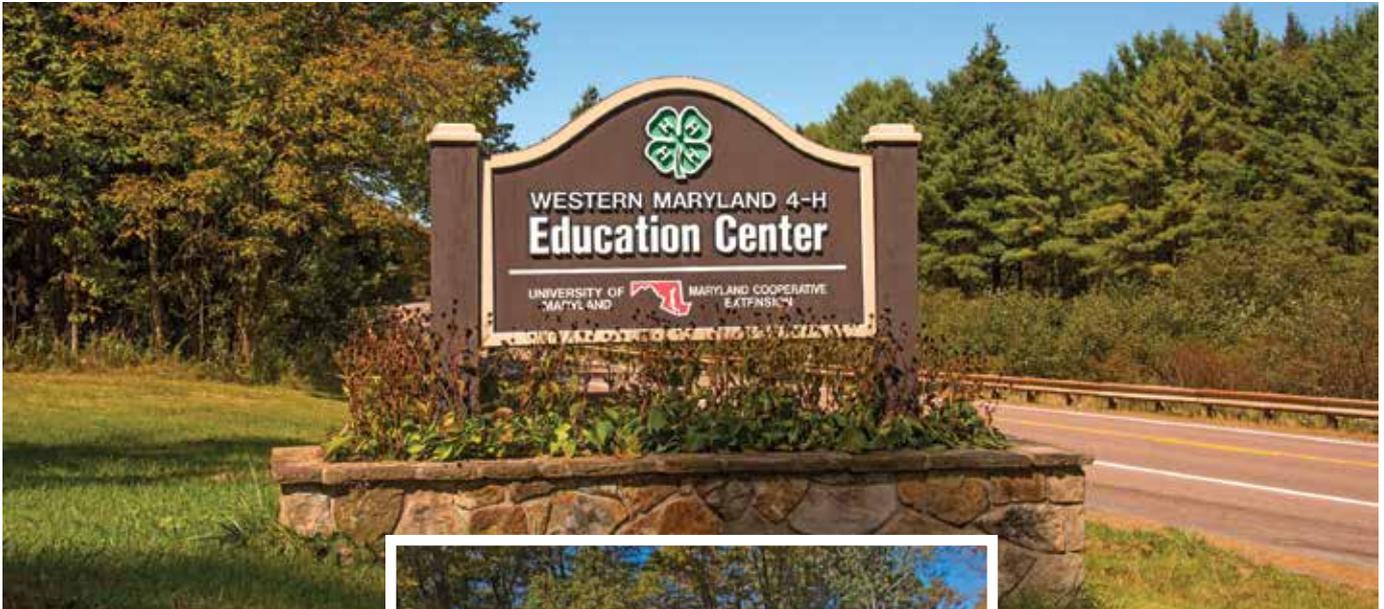


Outdoor School It's a lot of fun!

Written by: **Dan Whetzel**
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**



Marc Delaney, resident teacher at the Allegany County Outdoor School program, is not the only one who believes the camp experienced by students is exciting. Hundreds of fifth grade students feel the same way, as they trek toward the Maryland 4-H Environmental Education and Camping Center based in Garrett County, Maryland. The popular educational program offers a variety of hands-on learning activities that create memories that last a lifetime.

The Outdoor School program has a long tradition in Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS), stretching back to the elementary school days of parents and grandparents. Nearly everyone who attends has fond memories and stories to tell. While the ACPS Outdoor School has not always



Instructor, Tracy Hedrick, helps a student with a GPS unit during an orienteering exercise.

been held in Garrett County, most of the programming has been hosted there in recent years.

According to Anne Sherrard, administrator of the 4-H Camp located in Bittinger, the original facility was a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project built between 1936-1938, as part of the Franklin Roosevelt Administration's New Deal initiatives. Log cabins were the only structures until additional buildings were added at later dates when the 4-H program, operating under the auspices of the University of Maryland, located at the site.

Today, the 4-H Camp hosts a variety of youth leadership programs and special events throughout the year, while Outdoor School is exclusively held in the fall. "We are



Students learn while having fun in an outdoor setting, but also in science labs with microscopes that are connected to laptops. A wide range of interesting activities happen throughout the week including a beaver hike, bear and bat programs, scales and tails and more.

happy to host the Outdoor School in the fall because it is such a beautiful location for students to engage in activities,” stated Sherrard.

The Allegany County Public School system has supported the Outdoor School for a number of years and through many changes. According to Mike McGowan, elementary school supervisor and director of the program, “Sixth grade Outdoor School was dropped for a while back in the 1970s when the decision was made to create middle schools. The camp was even held for a short time at Rocky Gap State Park as a day program. Eventually, Outdoor School became part of the fifth grade curriculum while the 4-H Camp in Garrett County became the host site. The camp has all the facilities we need to run the program.” McGowan also notes, “The goal is to take the learning experiences to





a level that cannot be provided in a classroom setting. We designed 12 lessons that are not only aligned to the Maryland State Standards, but also hands-on experiences. We want the students to be engaged and part of a collaborative effort.”

The ACPS Board of Education has remained unwavering in its support for Outdoor School even though finances have been tight in recent years. The financial commitment means that all ACPS students are able to attend the five day program without charge.

Marc Delaney has been involved as a teacher since 2008 and enjoys the hands-on aspects of the camp. “Our science lessons include the use of microscopes that are connected to laptops. And there is a wide range of interesting activities including the beaver hike, story-telling, American history as told through displays of historical flags, field games, skit nights, bear and bat programs, and scales and tails.”

The five day camp has benefits that extend beyond the academic programming. According to Mr. Delaney, “We see the students grow academically, but even more so socially between Monday and Friday. Students experience a new environment and learn to cooperate with others.”

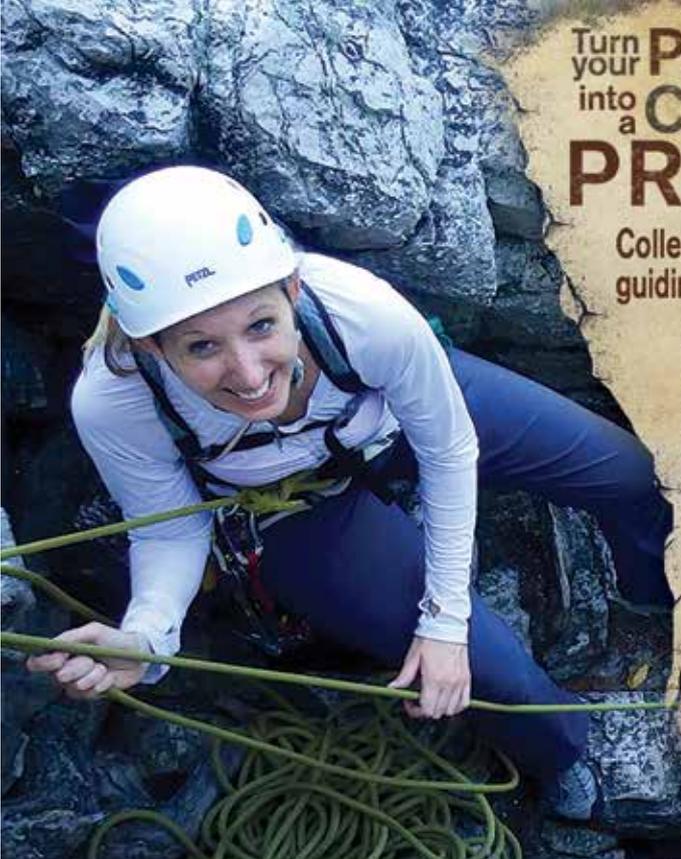
Cooperation of the 4-H staff and parent volunteers make for a successful program, and Mike McGowan is quick to credit

Marc Delaney, resident teacher at Outdoor School, enjoys the hands-on aspects of the camp through outdoor settings as well as in the various state-of-the-art science labs.

both. “Our program would not be successful without the 24 volunteers we have each week of the program and the residential teachers who dedicate themselves to the camp.”

All the hard work is rewarded from the stories and memories that are generated at every session. As Anne Sherrard states, “Outdoor School is an experience the students will remember for the rest of their lives.”

4-H Camp staff: Mike Brady, Camp Superintendent and Mary Lou Smith, long time cook at the Camp.

Turn your **PASSION** for **CLIMBING**
into a **CAREER** as an **ADVENTURE**
PROFESSIONAL!

College credit for instruction in rock climbing & guiding techniques, for all levels of ability & experience!

Program Highlights:

- Based in Seneca Rocks, WV
- Camping, food and equipment provided
- 2-4 week mentorship program with seasoned climbing professionals
- Instruction from the experts at the Adventuresports Institute and Seneca Rocks Mountain Guides
- Up to 8 college credits (optional) from the Adventuresports Institute of Garrett College
- Certification options, based on participant skill and experience:
 - AMGA Climbing Wall Instructor
 - PCGI Top Rope or Single Pitch Guide
 - PCGI Rescue
 - SRMG Rock Responder
 - Leave No Trace Trainer

For more information, call the Adventuresports Institute office at 301.387.3330, Email avs@garrettcollege.edu or visit www.adventuresportsi.org



Basic 2-Week Course Package:

June 6-17
Course Cost: \$1,487

4-college credits (optional):

- Garrett County Residents: No additional cost
- Other Maryland Residents: \$488 additional
- Non-Maryland Residents: \$648 additional

Advanced 4-Week Course Package:

June 6-July 1
Course Cost: \$2,949

8-college credits (optional):

- Garrett County Residents: No additional cost
- Other Maryland Residents: \$976 additional
- Non-Maryland Residents: \$1,296 additional

