

Conservation for kids

Classes offered at the Missouri Department of Conservation's northeast office give children a hands-on learning experience

BY CHRIS BROWN, Staff Reporter

The Missouri Department of Conservation's northeast office is giving children of all ages a new, up-close-and-personal look at nature.

The weekly naturalist programs offered at the Northeast Regional Office and Interpretive Center south of Kirksville include Knee High Naturalists for children age 3 to 5 and Creature Feature for children age 6 to 11.

Both programs offer hands-on lessons about fishing, map reading and other outdoor and nature-related subjects.

Department of Conservation naturalist Amanda Moore has been in charge of the naturalist education programs since 2010 and is responsible for planning lessons and teaching the classes.

Moore said the main focus of these programs is to educate children about conservation biology, ecology and basic outdoor skills. She said the topics differ each week and include a variety of nature-oriented lessons that focus on wildlife or skills like reading a map or identifying species of birds.

Moore said her classes typically include a variety of activities that allow the children to practice the skills they are being taught as they learn.

"If we do a fishing program, they will actually go fishing and they will also learn about different species of fish in Missouri and why we manage rivers and streams the way we do," Moore said.

Moore said her favorite part of teaching the naturalist classes is being able to see the children's fascination with nature and learning.

She said she also enjoys teaching the parents, who are required to attend for the younger age sections.

"If they're interested, and their kid is interested, then they go home and the kid will ask more questions and it just makes the learning explode from there," Moore said.

Misti Picton, a mother who home-schools her eight children in the Kirksville area, has been at-

tending the naturalist programs with her children since it began.

Picton said the program allows her children to learn about nature by exploring in a way that's impossible to recreate in a homeschool setting.

She said the program also fits nicely into a weekly nature study that is part of her children's homeschool curriculum.

The Picton family enjoys all the aspects of the program, including the interactive experience outdoors, Picton said.

"We like the feel of the building, the fact that we're in here learning about science and there's a taxidermied mink in the classroom," Picton said. "My kids love that."

The naturalist programs have been moved to a new afternoon timeslot at 3:30 p.m. following the addition of the new Discovery Team program for teenagers age 12 to 15, Conservation Education Consultant Karen Armstrong said.

Armstrong said the children's naturalist programs started with the creation of the Knee High Naturalist section for young children shortly after the regional office opened during December 2006.

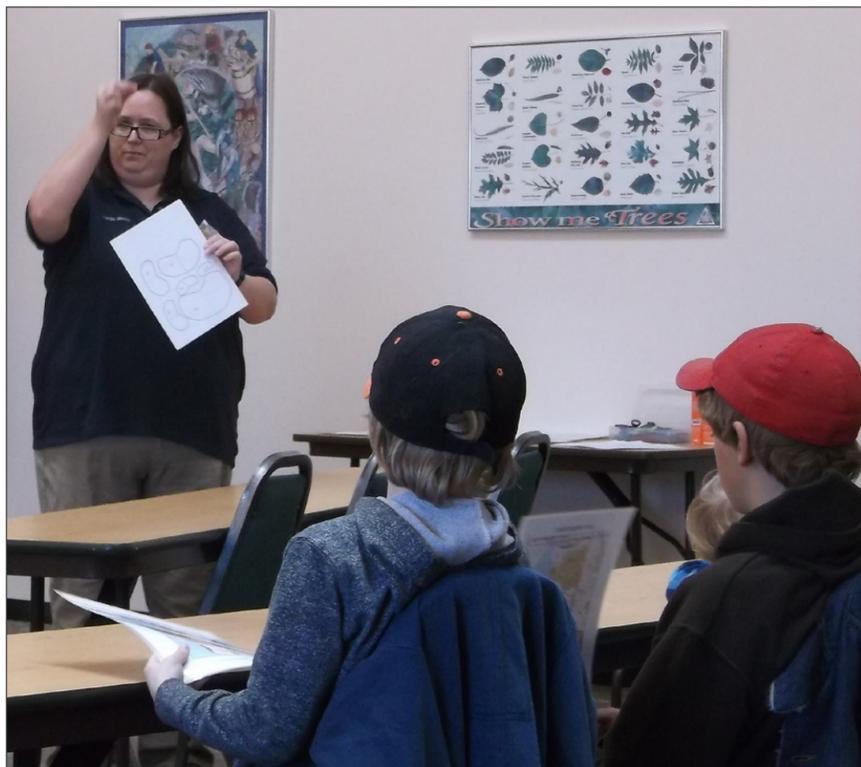
Armstrong said the program initially was popular with homeschooled families, but quickly became evident that there was a need to include older children as well, so they created the separate Creature Feature program.

"It was difficult to have that range, 3 to 13, and still be able to offer something for everyone," Armstrong said.

She said everything was going well with the two programs offered weekly at 1 p.m. until many of the children who initially attended the classes either became too old for the program or entered public school and weren't able to attend the classes.

To make the program more accessible to families with children attending public school, the Northeast Regional Office decided to move the time slot for the naturalist classes from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Armstrong said.

She said so far the new schedule change has been successful.



Above, naturalist Amanda Moore demonstrates how to read a map at the Creature Feature class March 13 at the Northeast Regional Office of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Below, Moore shows the class, including resident Misti Picton and her children, how to make a three-dimensional elevation map. The classes offer lessons about fishing, map reading and other outdoor and nature-related subjects for children ages 3 to 11.



OPEN DOORS WITH A BEAUTIFUL SMILE

INVISALIGN® SPECIAL EVENT

Friday, April 1st

Dr Kamra DeFries will be providing FREE consultations to answer your questions about Invisalign treatment, the clear way to straighten teeth. If you have wondered if Invisalign is right for you, make an appointment for this special event.

Complimentary whitening with dollar value up to \$350

Complimentary records with dollar value up to \$450

Dollars off treatment up to \$500

Financing options available

\$1300 VALUE

STRAIGHTEN YOUR TEETH WHILE YOU GET YOUR DEGREE

Space is limited to the first 15 appointments.

2013

PREFERRED PROVIDER

DR KAMRA DEFRIES

1 Crown Drive

Kirksville, MO 63501

(660)665-9869

**Invisalign Day and associated promotions are hosted and sponsored by Dr Kamra DeFries / and not by Align Technology, Inc.

 **invisalign**
The Clear Alternative to Braces

WOODY'S TIRE

 "Don't Cuss, Call Us"
 AUTO & TOWING, LLC

660-665-8617

After Hours 660-216-3123

1102 N. Green Kirksville, MO

- GOODYEAR
- COOPER
- KELLY
- ELDORADO

• Alignments • Shock Brakes • Wheel Balancing