

Edmond teachers use Project Wild to bring outdoors into class

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EDMOND — University of Central Oklahoma will host a workshop to help educators learn how to incorporate wildlife education into their curricula.

The Project Wild workshop will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jan. 30 at the UCO Center for Outdoor Adventure Recreation in Edmond Park on the north bank of Arcadia Lake.

The workshop requires a \$15 registration fee and participants receive Project Wild activity guides that provide hands-on activities educators can use in their classrooms.

Project Wild is run by UCO, but funded by the state Wildlife Conservation Department.

This year, the project will focus on increasing literacy in the classroom.

More than 23,000 Oklahoma educators have been trained in Project Wild in the past 24 years, officials said. The workshop is designed for a curriculum that can suit any learning level and age group.

Project Wild coordinator Lisa Anderson said the program will help educators feel comfortable in bringing wildlife education into the classroom.

"Kids are spending more time in front of the TV and less time outdoors," Anderson said. "This is a big push. It's important for kids to be active outdoors and this program helps educators feel comfortable to bring it in the classroom."

Hands-on experience

Project Wild is a national program recognized for its innovative educational tools that have helped educators increase outdoor activity in children's education.

"They love it," Anderson said. "It's really easy. The activities are well-written."

Vicki Vrooman, a fourth-grade science teacher at Tulsa's Holland Hall, was trained in Project Wild and also teaches the program at Tulsa Community College.

"It's so much fun," Vrooman said. "You are doing the lessons, playing the games and we are actually doing the arts so we are more likely to use it in the classroom."

Vrooman said attending Project Wild has helped her become a better educator. She was able to learn other teaching methods.

As a result, she saw major improvements in her students, she said.

"I find my students better understand the concept, because of the hands-on activity,"

Vrooman said. "They don't realize they are learning, because they are having fun at the same time."

At Tulsa Community College, Vrooman helps other educators understand and use the concept in their classrooms.

"They come in nervous, because they haven't really taught science," she said. "But then they feel relief when they see it is fun and easy."

Vrooman said the workshop is great for experienced and new educators.

"It gives you so many ideas, not just in science, it helps develop lessons in the English and social studies curriculum," she said.