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Educators gather for WILD projects

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By Christine Keeling

ckeeling@vindy.com

Boardman

Educators gathered Tuesday at Boardman Park for Project WILD and Growing up WILD workshops.

The supplementary education program was presented by Jamey Graham, communications specialist for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, and helped teachers give students in grades kindergarten through 12 a hands-on way to learn about wildlife.

"I love, love Project WILD," said Boardman Park recreation director Karen McCallum to the group of participants.

She suggested the curriculum could be tweaked to fit any classroom environment.

During the morning session, the group took part in a variety activities that included pretending they were deer who needed water, food and shelter to survive. When one of the elements wasn't available, "deer" were removed from the group.

The concept showed how the availability of basic necessities drive the deer population.

Teachers who use 'Oh, Deer' can ask students to plot the increase or decrease in the deer's numbers and incorporate science into math, McCallum said.

The activity is just one of many highlighted in three books that Graham gave members of the group. The Project Wild Curriculum Activity Guide and Project Wild Aquatic are geared for children kindergarten through 12th grade and Growing Up Wild: Exploring Nature with Young Children was field-tested for children age 3-7.

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Peg Flynn of the Mahoning County Green Team brought Fred the Fish to show how education about water pollution doesn't have to cost a lot.

"You don't need a school budget to do this," said Flynn. "It's a pretzel box and a foam fish. The rest you can find in the kitchen."

Fred floats in a water and things like dye, syrup and soap are added to simulate toxic waste, soap water and oil getting into a water supply. It was designed to make kids realize that six of the nine things demonstrated are things people do in everyday life.

"If it goes in the sewer, it goes in the water system," said Flynn. "By the end you can't see Fred."

Jeff Scacchetti said he planned to use the Hiding in Plain Site/Thicket game he learned during the workshop at a camp and Pinewood Derby outing that Cub Scout Pack 100 from Hubbard would be taking next weekend. He said he will also use the ideas at work, during next year's summer camp at Belmont Pines.

"It will keep the kids actively involved, because we spend so much time outside," Scacchetti said.

In the afternoon, Graham had educators visit stations and prepare to teach their peers.

"It gives them an chance to jump right in and get to know the activities," said Graham.

Project WILD is an international program developed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Council for Environmental Education. It is conducted by trained facilitators at various locations throughout the year. Participants who complete the program receive the activity books for free.

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