

Frederick H. Hooper Institute: 2009



The Frederick H. Hooper Institute continued to serve the youth of Walpole through its educational programs in 2009. In accordance with the will of George L. Hooper, programs in agriculture, forestry, botany, soils and environmental conservation were conducted. Hooper Institute personnel visited each classroom at the Walpole and North Walpole schools on a weekly basis.

The two school vegetable gardens were the sites of many lessons for the younger grades. By starting and planting seeds, mulching, weeding, watering and harvest, students learned about the life cycles and care of plants. Food was prepared into tasty treats. Herbs were dried and packaged as gifts, as were cuttings of plants. The flower garden in

front of the Middle School was the site of botany lessons for the upper grades. We also discussed the many career opportunities in agriculture related fields.

Fourth graders experienced Walpole's working landscape by participating in the Farm and Forest project, now in its 29th year. With cooperation from local farmers and woodsmen, students visited dairy, horse, poultry and Christmas tree farms. They saw logs sawed into lumber and wooden pegs turned. Students tasted fresh maple syrup and processed apples into cider. They learned about the importance of hay as a hillside crop and watched a round bale wrapped.

Wildlife was a favorite topic of study in every grade. Winter is an opportune time to learn about native mammals and their adaptations through tracks and other signs. Snowshoes add to the fun! Students studied the basics of wildlife biology through games and projects. We focused on insects, migration and endangered species. The Mill Pond Conservation Area is ideal for the study of pondlife, trees and birds. Hooper personnel helped fourth grade classes with their special "Bucket Buddies" pondlife project.

Forestry was covered in all grades from the simplest leaf rubbings to tree physiology, forest management and ecology. Students learned strategies to identify tree species. They utilized their math skills when they measured trees, calculated board feet and stumpage values. Tales of log drives on the "Great River" helped us transition to spring studies of the Connecticut River watershed, including its natural and human history.



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Students learned about the geologic history of the valley and the impact of weathering on the soils we use today. They were surprised by the differences between soils sampled on school property and the myriad soil “critters” living beneath their feet. Through songs and stories students learned the importance of soil conservation for our well being. Students saw soil created through the “magic” of composting in the vegetable gardens.

At the high school level, seventeen youths were placed at local farms and related businesses as part of the two-month summer work program. In 2009, the teens worked almost 1600 hours in the community. Thanks to their mentors, they were trained to care for animals and plants. The teens learned valuable work skills and gained insight into the effort involved in operating a business.

The summer camp programs for younger children attracted over ninety participants. Younger children explored the grounds at Hooper and did many hands-on activities. Older campers hiked and biked to many spectacular natural sites in town and visited local farms. One week was devoted to individual woodworking projects using our woodshop.

The Institute building and grounds hosted five school groups at its Farm & Forest Museum. The Family Fun programs attracted ten families during four spring and fall programs. Thanks to Fritze Till of the Tri-Village Energy group, a dozen community garden plots bloomed on the hillside behind Hooper.

The Institute received \$1,644 in income from donations, grants and fees to its Farm & Forest Museum. Thanks to the many people who have supported Hooper efforts with donations of time and expertise this year, especially the Hooper Institute Committee.



Respectfully submitted,
Eloise Clark
Director