

From: Christopher Nurczyk
Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2019 12:34 PM
To: Nan Buckardt
Subject: Science Explorers in Nature Program

Dear Ms. Buckardt:

My name is Christopher Nurczyk, and I am a sixth grade Earth Science You may remember that I talked with you at the Science Explorers in Nature open house on July 12th, and I told you that I was grateful that this program continues. I thought I might drop you a line to expound further on my reasons for my whole-hearted support of your program.

I teach earth science at Beach Park Middle School in Beach Park. We are a Title 1 school, and many of our parents being challenged by income are limited in affordability and availability of supplemental summer enrichment programs for their children. Like so many public educational institutions today, we are often challenged by budget and larger class sizes in administering curriculum to our students. The Science Explorers in Nature program that LCDPF provides enables my students who apply a chance at high quality hands-on scientific and engineering exploration with quality instructors with a much better instructor to student ratio - nothing helps student success like more individual contact with a quality instructor in a superior program. The format of the program, culminating in the application of Scientific Method in scientific explorations and presentations by student teams is an inspired feature of Science Explorers in Nature. The children not only experience science and engineering practices, they apply them. The participants develop critical thinking skills that will serve them well in any field they should choose in the future. This is not only a good thing for the participants, it is important for the healthy functioning of our society. Thank you for providing this setting.

One of the most heartening aspects of Science Explorers in Nature is the number of young ladies who participate in your program. The STEM world has been an 'old boys network' for far too long. While many women have started to break the glass ceilings in these fields, we still have far to go. As a science educator, I see that far too many girls do not realize their abilities in developing their interests and possibilities in these careers, and actively work at encouraging young ladies in these pursuits - recommending participation in Science Explorers in Nature is one way I do this. Your program allows young women to see their abilities and potential in practical terms, and to blossom and expand their skill sets. At the open house last Friday, I met a parent of a female student I recommended to Science Explorers in Nature three years ago, when she was a sixth grade student. As her mother reminded me, the young lady wasn't really sure that the program was right for her, but after encouragement, was willing to give it a try. After one summer of the experience, she realized her true interests and reapplied and attended for two more summers. Science Explorers in Nature provides a conduit for young ladies from ordinary, rather than upper-class households, to the possibilities for them in the science and engineering world. This is an important thing, and is much underserved in our culture.

In my opinion, a large part of your success lies in the excellent staff administering the program. I know Mr. Phillipp personally and have always been impressed with his interest and devotion to science education, and in the personal development of his students - I feel you are fortunate to have him involved. Ms. Vaos has worked hard in attracting students to your program, and shows personal investment in making sure the program is available to deserving students. A young lady from one of my science classes was very interested in the program, applied, and was recommended by me. Unfortunately, after she was accepted into Science Explorers in Nature, the office of the mobile home development she lives in misdirected her acceptance letter and my student had no idea that she was to be included this summer. Because of Ms. Vaos' proactive following up with me on the matter, this student didn't miss out on a great opportunity. Not only did she attend and enjoy the program, she was inspired by her experience to work on a rather ambitious wildlife research study for her end project. This shows the quality of Science Explorers in Nature - every one of the students I talked to in their presentations at the open house not only enjoyed their experience, they were enthusiastic about it (not that common in modern kids, I can tell you!). They were also grateful to the staff for their help and personal interest in them.

One last thought from an aging science educator - I am also a local tax-payer. It is so encouraging in this day and age to see a program that spends my money so well, so effectively, and that has a such a continuing positive effect on our society for the future. I would appreciate it if you would make the powers that be aware of these facts. Please, please keep the Science Explorers in Nature program going on a continuing basis. I think it is one of the most important things you do.

Sincerely,

Mr. Christopher Nurczyk
6th Grade Earth Science Teacher
Beach Park Middle School
Beach Park, IL 60099