READ TO ME UNDER THE GREAT OAK TREE

FINAL REPORT

Introduction:

The Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center serves a premier outdoor experience for people living in the Chicago land area. Visitors have many opportunities to explore their natural resources at the center. They are welcome to hike the three miles of walking trail, enjoy interpretive displays and exhibit wildlife located in the schoolhouse or participate in many educational programs offered throughout the year. Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree, a new educational program for the year 2005, was developed to promote literacy while instilling an awareness and stewardship of our natural resources, especially our non-game species, for children in the grades of K-8. Selected literature will be utilized to introduce members of Illinois' biodiversity; educational and stewardship activities would help to establish an awareness and appreciation for their management.

Each month, a new book is selected as the central reading. The book reading and activities are then scheduled for a specific date. On this date, the book is introduced, read and discussed. After the discussion, the participants are then involved in engaging activities that are an extension of the story. A sample outline of the program for Lost In The Woods is attached.

Materials:

To develop and initiate this program, the following materials were needed:

Books - nature themed, true to life works that were written for children at the kindergarten through the junior high school level.

Poster Board – for making a display to advertise the program and its source of funding

Computer Graphics Program – for creating activity sheets, posters, flyers, etc.

Vinyl Lettering for Display

Lamination for Reading Certificates

Journals – for participants to record their observations, experiences, and thoughts

Binoculars – for participant use

CD of animal vocalizations – for educational purposes

Method:

Recruit volunteers to assist with project

Develop and create a display that would promote the new program, detailing the target audience and activities

Create posters that would be displayed at the center advertising the new program and distributed for public use

Research age appropriate books for program – (K-4th and 5th-8th grades)

Research educational materials needed for program – binoculars, journals, CD of animal vocalizations

Develop purchase orders for materials needed

Submit and await approval for such orders

Read books and develop an outline for book review

Develop educational activities appropriate to stories

Plan dates for "Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree" programs

Conduct programs and educational activities

Assess effectiveness of program activities

Revise activities in needed

Results:

"Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree" programs were scheduled on the following dates:

Dates:	Grade	Title	No. of Participants
July 9, 2005:	(K-4)	Lost in the Woods	0
July 23, 2005:	(5-8)	There's an Owl in the Shower	0
August 20, 2005:	(K-4)	Lost in the Woods	5
August 27, 2005:	(5-8)	There's an Owl in the Shower	0
September 10, 2005:	(K-4)	Mississippi Going North	12
September 24, 2005:	(5-8)	My Side of the Mountain	0
October 8, 2005:	(K-4)	Box Turtle at Long Pond	7
October 29, 2005:	(5-8)	My Side of the Mountain	0
November 12, 2005:	(K-4)	In November	0
November 12, 2005:	(5-8)	Jackie's Wild Seattle	0
December 10, 2005:	(K-4)	Stranger in the Woods	0
December17, 2005:	(5-8)	Jackie's Wild Seattle	0

2006

April 8, 2006:	(K-4)	Secret Place
April 16, 2006:	(5-8)	Flute's Journey
May 7, 2006	(K-4)	Eaglet's World
May 21, 2006	(5-8)	Who Really Killed Cock Robin

Discussion:

"Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree" was a new program that we had hoped to offer at the Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center in July 2004. Delays with the release of the grant unfortunately put this program on hold for several months. "Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree" was finally offered as part of our interpretive program in July 2005.

Last May marked our 50th anniversary and as part of our celebration, the display for "Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree", was placed in a prominent location in the schoolhouse. It was hoped that this new program would attract large numbers of children and their families. To add to its appeal, several books with varied topics were chosen. The stories chosen were based on different subjects such as owls, seasonal change, deer, and wildlife rehabilitation.

The delay in funding had adverse affects on this program. Progress was slow because of financial uncertainty. Purchase orders were placed on hold. Any supplies that were needed had to be borrowed from personal collections, other nature centers, local libraries (some books were unavailable) or left out of programs entirely.

152 volunteer hours were devoted to the design and development of the display, literature review, activity development and planning, and bid requests for purchasing. Forty books were chosen as appropriate for our region as a means of discussing biodiversity, biological threats, good land ethic, positive stewardship behavior, etc. Many of these books were either out of stock or out of print. Unfortunately, not all desired books could be purchased.

For the year 2005, twelve book club gatherings were offered; six for each age group. Only 3 of the twelve programs were well attended. All three were from the K-4th level. It appears as though there was not much interest from children in grades 5th-8th. Students of this age are required by school to read several books throughout the school year. Many schools require their students to read Caudill books and for this reason, Jackie's Wild Seattle (a Caudill book) was chosen. By including a required reading, it was our hope that more interest would be taken in the program by students in the 5th-8th grades. This book was offered for the first time in November with little response. A few calls inquiring about the program's date and time were received, yet turn out was poor. It was again offered in December with the same result. The reasons for lack of interest in this type of program for junior high school students are many. Other activities, increased homework load, other interests or the lack of emphasis on reading for this age group all may contribute to the poor response. Our efforts are not exhausted however. Increased advertising and marketing for this program for junior high school students will be one of our main goals this spring.

Of the 24 children that participated in the three program offerings, none were repeat participants. This is unfortunate as we had hoped that there would be a following of sorts for this program. Again several inquiring calls were received, yet response was lacking. The children and their parents who did attend these programs were enthusiastic and conveyed a great interest in returning for other programs.

When this program was developed, our center had a small trailer that was used for educational programs. This trailer provided a classroom where we could conduct our programs away from the distractions in the schoolhouse building. The trailer has since been removed and any indoor programs we plan must be held in the schoolhouse. This makes it very challenging for staff to lead this type of program where reading and discussion are essential. The approaching warmer months will provide some relief as we can then conduct this program outside and immerse our visitors in our natural resources as we read and discuss the chosen story as intended.

To increase awareness and participation regarding this program, more information will be provided to the press. Flyers and posters will be distributed to other Forest Preserve District of Cook County locations, local schools and public libraries. A strong effort will focus on summer participation so that children will continue to read, learn and participate in stewardship activities when school is not in session.

Summary:

While the response for "Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree" during its first year was below our expectations, it is anticipated that increased attendance will occur during the coming year. Appropriate and increased marketing will no doubt have a positive effect on such a worthwhile program. For the coming year, 2006, there are 20 programs planned – 10 for each age level (K-4) and (5-8). Extension activities based on the subject of the stories will be age appropriate and stewardship based. This program will be a useful tool in promoting awareness of Illinois' natural resources, wise land use, and sound wildlife and land management practices for years to come.

Expenditures:

Materials Cost:

Binoculars: Carolina Biological Supply		$ 255.95
Peterson Guide CD for Frog and toad vocalizations:		$ 46.80
CD of insect vocalizations:		UNAVAILABLE
Peterson Guide CD bird calls:		UNAVAILABLE
Journals: No response from vendors for items requested		
Children's Books: books UNAVAILABLE)		$ 183.69 (some
Computer graphics Program for publishing certificates, flyers, posters, etc.:		$ 109.99
		Total: $ 596.43

In kind costs – Funding match:

Volunteer time:	$10.00/hour X 152 hours =	$1520.00
Matte board:		$5.99
Foam Board:	$10.00/sheet X 2 =	$20.00
Color Copies:	$1.00/copy X 3 =	$3.00
Vinyl Lettering:	$ 4.00/yard X 8 =	$32.00
Book Marks – made in house:		
Construction paper:		$8.72
Laminate (1 roll):		$34.05
Stamps: (Deer, hummingbird, spider, Bald eagle, coyote)	$5.50/each X 5 =	$27.50

Total: $1649.26

"Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree"

Lost In The Woods by Carl R. Sams II and Jean Stoick

Introduction:

Explain that this story is about a fawn that is supposedly "lost" in the woods.

Read Story:

Discussion:

Review story
Ask questions relevant to the understanding of the visitors
Ask questions relevant to the story

Activities:

Doe and fawn pictures: describe the characteristics of deer (mammals, coats, hooves, ungulates, etc.)

*** Discuss how deer use their senses for survival - compare to our senses.
*** Discuss the importance of deer in our area.
Discuss problems of deer overpopulation

Fawn hide: describe advantages of spots, lack of scent – strategies for survival

Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center

presents

Read to Me Under the Great Oak Tree

(a reading program promoting literacy and stewardship)

This program is funded in part through a grant from the

Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund

We're going on a reading adventure for summer!
Children from K-8th grade are invited to join our nature book club.
We'll read fun stories about the animals and plants that you'll find in your backyard, in the Forest Preserves and throughout Illinois.

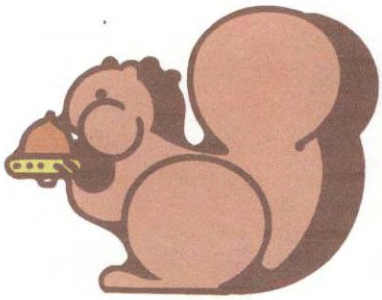
K-4th graders can read the story ahead of time or simply join us on the day of the reading.

5th-8th graders are asked to read the selected story ahead of time so that we can enjoy a more thorough discussion of the story and apply its meaning to our local natural resources.

After the reading, each group will then participate in educational field activities. Field activities may include bird walks, bird monitoring, brush cutting, pond dipping, work with plant keys, etc.

For more information, a list of selected readings and dates of upcoming programs, please call the nature center at (708) 839-6897.

Read to me Under the Great Oak Tree



November 12, 2005

1:30pm

In November

by

Cynthia Rylant

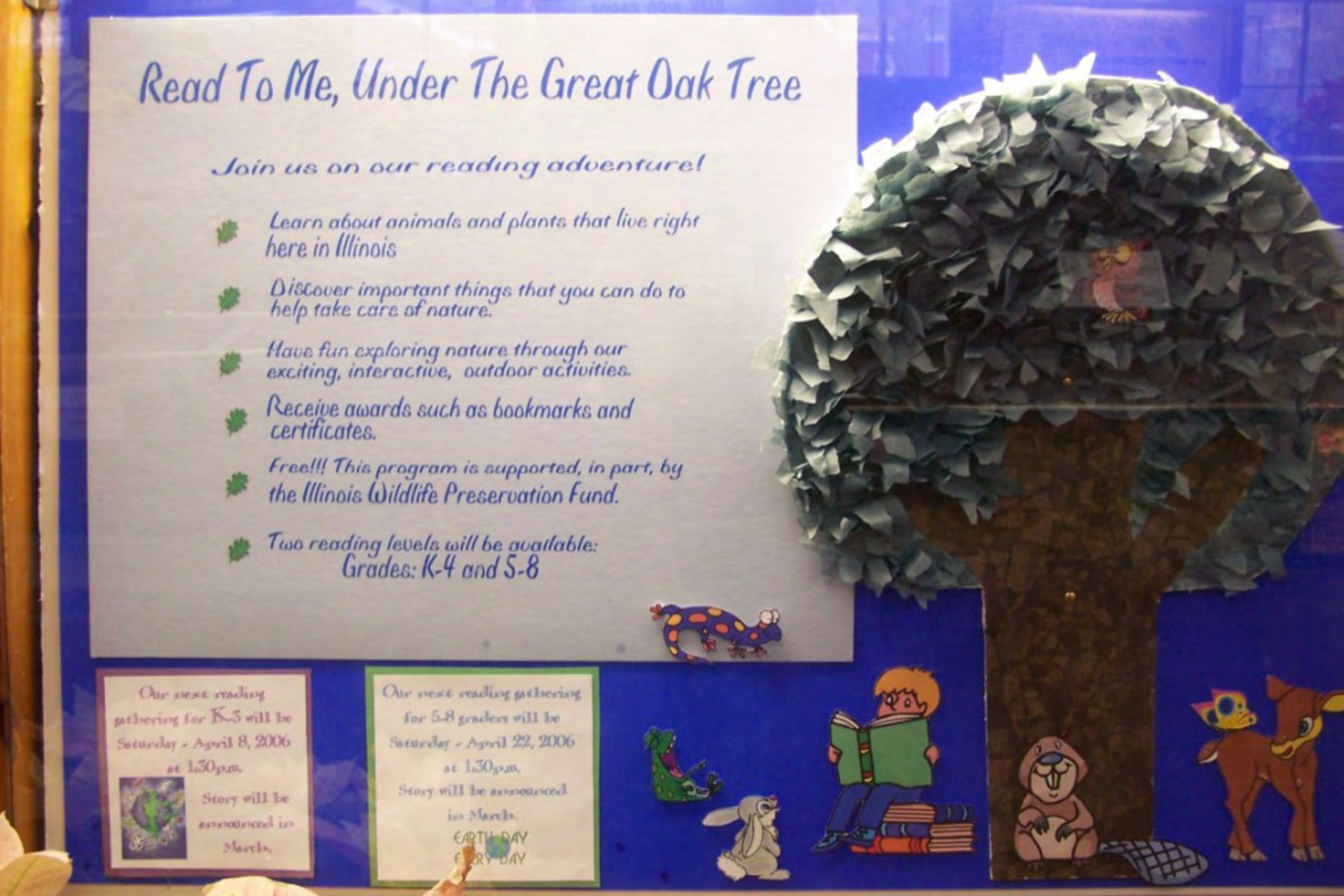
K-3rd grade youngsters are invited to join us for the reading of In November .
Trail activities and a craft will follow.

This program is funded in part by the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund.

Read To Me, Under The Great Oak Tree

Join us on our reading adventure!

- Learn about animals and plants that live right here in Illinois
- Discover important things that you can do to help take care of nature.
- Have fun exploring nature through our exciting, interactive, outdoor activities.
- Receive awards such as bookmarks and certificates.
- Free!!! This program is supported, in part, by the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund.
- Two reading levels will be available:
  Grades: K-4 and 5-8



Sky Dancer
The Hungry Hummingbird
Morning on the Lake
Written by Jan Bourdeau Waboose
Illustrated by Karen Reczuch
Jean Craighead George
Ereth's Birthday
Avi
Illustrated by Brian Floca
Quiet Night
by Marilyn Singer
illustrated by John Manders
Around the Pond: Who's Been Here?
By Lindsay Barrett George
The Far-Flung Adventures of
Homer the Hummer
The Barn Owls
A Photographic Fantasy
Lost in the Woods
Birds
Audrey Wood

New life came to the woods
before the sun touched the tops of the trees.
He slept quietly in the tall grass
on the north edge of the meadow
where the trees start the forest.
Homer the
BIRD