

Friends of the Porkies

The Importance of Environmental Education through the Arts and Crafts Exploration
surrounding Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park

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HU4694: Grant Writing

Project Abstract

The Friends of the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park (Friends of the Porkies) are dedicated to enhancing the park to create the most enjoyment for every visitor. They stand to promote, support, and assist the Michigan DNR to offer interpretive, scientific, historical, and educational services.¹

The Friends of the Porkies proudly sponsor The Porcupine Mountains Folk School. The Folk School is a place where people learn traditional arts and skills while gaining a deeper appreciation of natural resources.

Within the Folk School there is the Beach Arts Class. The Beach Arts Class is directed towards children, and cultivating an appreciation for the natural resources that are available to them. The Beach Arts Class is the Friends way of *helping kids discover Nature's playground*.

Statement of Need

Why is Arts Education Important?

The importance of the arts has been declining for more than a decade with the consideration that the arts are pretty, but not essential. Arts education is most frequently the first program cut from institutions struggling with budgets. However, in an article from edutopia.org entitled "Why Arts Education Is Crucial, and Who's Doing It Best" Fran Smith says, "Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skills. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork".²

A Center for Dance writer, Craig W. Johnson, had some interesting comments on the importance of the Arts in the Community. Johnson says that there are more to the arts than there seems. "The performing and visual arts are supposed to be entertaining, but behind every creative endeavor exists a more profound concept...the arts remind us of our power to innovate".³

Why is it Important to have Outdoor Activity?

Over the years, children have become more acquainted with technology and less with outdoor activity. According to a report by the Department of Natural Resources, "DNR Reconnecting Children and Nature Top ten reasons to be concerned", children spend an average of 6.5 hours a day with electronic media and only 30 minutes per week in unstructured play time outdoors. It was also stated that children who have the opportunity to play outside are less likely to suffer obesity or contract diabetes while simultaneously developing greater levels of creativity, cooperation, conflict resolution and leadership.⁴

Getting out and enjoying nature is important, but its importance seems to have declined over the years. The report from the DNR states, "In one generation, the percentage of people who

¹ "Our Vision and Mission." Porkies.org. Friends of the Porkies, n.d. Web. 13 Dec. 2012. <<http://porkies.org/our-vision-and-mission/>>.

² Smith, Fran. "Why Arts Education Is Crucial, and Who's Doing It Best." Edutopia. The George Lucas Educational Foundation, 28 Jan. 2009. Web. 11 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.edutopia.org/arts-music-curriculum-child-development>>.

³ Johnson, Craig W. "The Importance of the Arts in a Community." TheCenterforDance.org. U-Turn Dance Center for the Arts, Apr. 2006. Web. 11 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.thecenterfordance.org/user/Arts%20and%20the%20Community.pdf>>.

⁴ "DNR Reconnecting Children and Nature Top ten reasons to be concerned." Michigan.gov. Department of Natural Resources, n.d. Web. 14 Nov. 2012. <www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/DNR-chldrn-n-ntr-top10_347638_7.pdf>.

reported that the outdoors was the most influential environment of their childhood dropped from 96% to 46%”.⁵ Nowadays, kids are not participating in outdoor activities as much as they should.

The Beach Arts class is a great way to get children outside and encourages families to spend time together. While the need to reacquaint children with nature is apparent, this class also offers an arts education unlike any other. Nestled in the heart of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the park offers children an opportunity to interact with nature in order to create their art projects, learning along the way. With the decrease in arts education around the United States, incorporating a critical aspect of education along with an interaction in nature establishes an important necessity in the quaint location of the Upper Peninsula where the area struggles to create a solid artistic foundation.

With an emphasis in art education and environmental interaction, this Beach Arts class serves to brighten every child’s mind.

The Beach Arts Class

The Porcupine Mountain Folk School Beach Arts Class, taught by Tina Davidson, provides children and their families an educational opportunity to learn about the surrounding environment and instigate an interest in the arts. Tina Davidson is an artist from Maryland who has summered in the area since she was a child. She is a certified music Braille transcriber, who has immersed herself in crafts over the years.

Participants in the class are guided in fashioning figures and other works of art from items found on the beach. The program is offered free of charge for children 10-years old and up, and their families.⁶

To quote the instructor, “It’s fun for kids and adults to be creative, and if you supply folks with enough rocks, glass, driftwood, glue, adhesive grout and show them how to put it all together... it’s magic.... and uses the folk school facilities and reaches out to the community and offers something for free for kids or adults.”

The class has previously been successful. It was run during Summer 2012. Three classes were held and each class had a capacity of twelve attendants. Some of the art created in the class is pictured on the next page. During Summer 2013, the goal would be to expand to six classes with a capacity of fifteen students per class.

⁵ "DNR Reconnecting Children and Nature Top ten reasons to be concerned." Michigan.gov. Department of Natural Resources, n.d. Web. 14 Nov. 2012. <www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/DNR-chldr-n-ntr-top10_347638_7.pdf>.

⁶ Foley, Angie. "Grant Writing - Introductions." Message to the author. 21 Sept. 2012. E-mail.



Photos courtesy of Friends of the Porkies

Goals, Objectives, Methods

There are two main goals for the Beach Arts class. The first is to increase participation in the Folk School, and more specifically the Beach Arts class. The second is to increase appreciation for natural materials, especially those found along the shores of Lake Superior.

To obtain these goals the objectives of the Beach Arts class are as follows:

- Increase participation from a 4:1 park-goer to camper participant ratio to a 2:1 ratio
- Have 100% of participants attend the class with their families
- Create projects with natural materials

In order to achieve these goals and objectives increasing advertising is going to be critical. The use of local media such as TV and radio will be valuable, as well as the use of print media.

Flyers are already used as a way to advertise for the Folk School, but circulation of these flyers could be increase. If flyers were distributed with park registration more campers may be aware of the Folk School, and the classes that it offers. Flyers could also be distributed in the local area to increase knowledge of the classes.

Evaluation

Class Success

For the first session of classes, hand out surveys at the end of each class in order to properly obtain an idea of the success and overall satisfaction of the class. Together, the success of the goals and methods can be assessed via answers from the participants. Take note of the projects created including type of project and materials used and which were enjoyed the most and least. This can help evaluate projects and ideas for next session of classes.

Advertising

Take note of enrollment numbers and advertising techniques put into place and evaluate success of outreach to surrounding community. Outreach also includes to campers in order to ensure camper participation in valuable camp activity.

Sustainability

In order to sustain the success of the program, advertising techniques will be crucial. It is also crucial that the overhead organizations stay focused on the mission of the project to continue its success.

The Porcupine Mountains supports the Folk School. Not only does the Folk School, with the Beach Arts class included, take place within the Porcupine Mountain State Park, but these programs go hand-in-hand with the mission of the park. That is to help people to get out and enjoy the natural environment that Michigan has to offer.

The Friends of the Porkies have run the Beach Arts Class once before and found it to be an enriching experience for those who participated in it, and it is because of this positive response that they decided to not only run the program a second time but to search for funding to expand the program.

Budget

The budget being requested from Explore Fund is \$1000, broken down into two major categories. Of that money, \$890 of it will be used for the materials themselves while the remaining \$110 will be used for advertising supplies, such as printing and ad placements.

Projected Expenses

Supplies	Total Cost (\$)
18 Quart-sized Pails of Adhesive & Grout	144
18 Putty Knives	54
18 Hot Glue Guns	270
Glue Sticks	50
18 Small White Glue Bottles	72
Wood	100
Clay dishes	150
Paper Towels & Plates	50
TOTAL	890

Advertising	Total Cost (\$)
Radio	
Flyer Printing	
TOTAL	110

The Friends of the Porkies have in-kind donations that help with their expenses. The instructor, Tina Davidson does not get paid for teaching the class. The Friends is a volunteer organization so anything that their members do for the class could be considered as in-kind donations.

Projected Income

In-Kind Donations	Approximate Monetary Value (\$)
Instructor	360
TOTAL	

Organization Background

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park is Michigan's largest area of undeveloped wilderness; approximately ninety-two square miles⁷, being the only range of mountains in Michigan open to the public.

People have been acting in the best interest of the Porkies since the early 1940s. Over the years, different park issues have brought people together who call themselves Friends of the Porkies. In April of 1987, a meeting was held to organize committees that would be able to implement "a plan for the park that the public" wanted. These committees were: Skiing, Historical, Harbor and Waters, Snowmobiles, Hunting and Fishing, Nature and Environment, and Liaison.

In January of 1998, the Friends of the Porkies decided to establish a board of directors and officers and to apply for federal nonprofit status. Since then, the organization has grown and been able to take on projects that help support and promote the Porkies and its users.⁸

The Friends of the Porkies has approximately 150 volunteers who put in approximately five hours a week, and a core set of 10-15 volunteers who dedicate 10+ hours per week.⁹

The park and Friends of the Porkies offer programs to educate children and their families on the importance of the environment while strengthening the awareness of community arts. Some of the programs that they offer are: the Music Festival, Artist-in-Residence, and the Folk School.

The Music Festival has increased the slowest weekend of the year for the Park into the busiest. It is a three-day music festival featuring Americana, folk, blues, bluegrass, contemporary music, and top-class regional and national touring acts. Approximately 1,250 people attend per day.¹⁰

⁷ Eshbach, Charles. "Porcupine Mountains." *Keweenaw Travel Online*. N.p., 2008. Web. 15 Oct. 2012.

<http://www.kewtrav.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18:porcupine-mountains&catid=6:places-of-interest&Itemid=2>.

⁸ "About the Friends." About the Friends. Friends of the Porkies, n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2012. <<http://porkies.org/about-the-friends-of-the-porkies/>>.

⁹ Foley, Angie. "Creating Our Proposal." Message to the author. 21 Sept. 2012. E-mail.

¹⁰ "Music Festival." Music Festival. Friends of the Porkies, n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2012. <<http://porkies.org/music-festival/>>.

The Folk School is a collection of classes that provide people the opportunity to learn traditional arts and skills as well as gaining an appreciation for the vast resources, both of nature and cultural that the park has to offer.¹¹ The Beach Arts Class is an integral part of the Folk School.

¹¹ "Music Festival." Music Festival. Friends of the Porkies, n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2012. <<http://porkies.org/music-festival/>>.