

*Happy Winter Solstice!*

*Best 5 Articles of the Quarter! Presidents letter, Indiana's Nature Play Days, 2016 EEAI conference, Travels with Morris, and Envirothon History*



# CREED

## December 2015

### Presidents Letter

My email inbox has been flooded with lots of junk the last few weeks. Subject lines read "Buy This! 20% Off! Rewards, Rewards, Rewards!!! Free shipping! The Holiday Is The Time For Buying Things You Don't Need!!!!" Fortunately, my inbox has also contained great news for environmental education.



Last week the Senate passed a bill called Every Student Succeeds Act. This act replaces No Child Left Behind. This bill contains language that encourages hands-on, field-based learning experiences for students. "The inclusion of environmental education language in the Every Student Succeeds Act signifies an important step forward for teachers and school systems who know what a rich and engaging context the local environment is for learning," said Judy Braus, Executive Director of The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).

This is a big win for EE and students!

The Nature Conservancy also sent me a nice email containing Mary McConnell's TedX Talk. In the video Mary talked about the Children's Nature Park. In 2016 students will be deeded a parcel of land in the park. Students will be able to visit their land in person, or online. We will be celebrating the Children's Nature Park June 18, 2016 at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana for our annual conference. Spread the word! Indiana's Bicentennial and EEAI! It's going to be one to remember!

In the last CREED I asked you to respond to some questions. "Why are you a member of EEAI? When a friend asks, "What is EEAI?", what is your reply? Why do you attend the conference? Why haven't you attended the conference lately? Of course, you don't have to answer all of these questions. I'm ultimately interested in the main question, WHAT DOES EEAI MEAN TO YOU? Email your responses to <mailto:president@eeai.org> Unfortunately, one person responded. I'd love to compile more responses.

Don't forget to check out Children in Nature Network (ICAN), the Environmental Literacy Plan (ELP), and Envirothon. Also, look for news from your Regional Chairs in

the near future! Have you followed us on Twitter and Facebook? Links for both can be found on the main page of <http://www.eeai.org>

## Nature Play Days June 11 - 19, 2016

To encourage kids and families to get outdoors, the Indiana Children and Nature Network (ICAN) is introducing Nature Play Days in 2016! ICAN is inviting organizations across the state to hold a Nature Play Day event anytime between June 11 and 19 in their community. Did you get a copy of the invitation?



Hosting a Nature Play Day is as easy as picking a date, time and location and then letting your community know about it! Design a new event or schedule an annual program during June 11-19. ICAN is here to provide support materials, publicize your event, and share in the fun!

Nature Play Days information is available on the ICAN website, along with a place to register your event. The website can provide print material to help promote your Nature Play Days, how to plan a Nature Play Day and activities. Share your event on social media using the hashtag #ICANNaturePlayDays so others can check out the fun.

Look on the website for an invitation that you can share with other community organizations. There is also a poster and other materials to download. Look

for support resources and training opportunities.

Indiana Children and Nature Network (ICAN) is a project of EEAI encouraging children to spend more time outdoors for their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Be active in EEAI and participate in our Nature Play Days!

Get involved <http://www.indianachildrenandnature.org>

## EEAI Annual Conference June 17-19

### A new format for presentations announced

The organizing team for the upcoming EEAI conference has created a new kind of format for our Saturday presentations. Normally, we have a juried process where potential presenters submit applications to an EEAI body that assesses each one.

This results in approximately a dozen presentations that attendees choose from. At most, one can see 2 or 3 presentations, depending on how they're staggered.

This year, we're going to invite presenters to table at the conference, preparing 20-

minute presentations to be shared at their table to conference attendees. Visualize this: You're a formal or informal educator, and when it comes to environmental education, you've found certain practices that work better than other practices. Or you've successfully collaborated with an unexpected partner. Or you've figured out how to get grant money and want to share how.

At your table, you may have interactive materials or a powerpoint on a computer or brochures or sign-up sheets for more information — whatever you want. But you will create a 20 minute presentation/talk in an informal setting at the conference that you might end up doing a total of six times.

In our conference call conversations, we've been calling this a Chautauqua, because we like the name and because it suggests a more dynamic and entertaining format for our conference. We were also motivated by the knowledge that members of EEAI, along with first-time conference attendees, will each have valuable knowledge to share. The more of a sharing environment we can create, the better the conference!

Here's how we're visualizing this for the Saturday of conference.

Conference goes have from 8:30 to 9 a.m. to quickly browse the options. At 9 a.m., they settle in at the table of their choice and then shift, every 20 minutes, to another table they've settled upon. We'll do that up until 10:40, giving attendees the opportunity to see six separate table presentations.

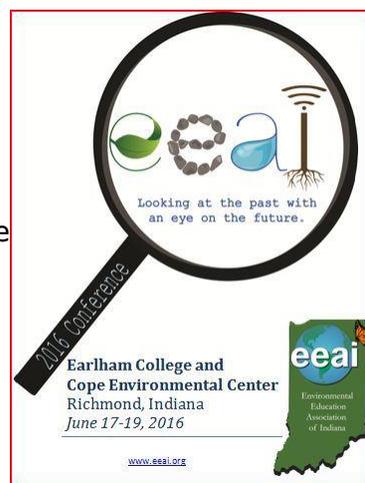
For the presenters, this format gives them the opportunity to hone their message over six presentations, but it's also fine if they want to skip a section or two to visit other stations of interest. There may be one person at your table at a timeslot, or there may be a dozen. Also, a presenter might want to team up with a co-presenter, creating even more flexibility to visit other tables.

But that's not all! From 10:40 to 11:30, we'll have a free time, free range mixer, giving everyone the opportunity to learn more about their favorite presentation, or to visit another table they didn't have time to see.

Like we said, we're excited about this! It means more presenters: Depending on space at the conference, we will double; triple or even quadruple the number of presenters we'd normally have. It means more knowledge shared, in an informal, peer-to-peer format. More knowledge shared is better for Indiana educators and our students.

We hope this creates an exciting experience for the increased number of teachers we expect, given the summer vacation setting for the conference, and that they'll want to come back to future conferences, regardless of when they fall on the calendar.

Finally, we like how this way of staging presentations serves the spirit of the Children of Indiana Nature Park. It will give nearly everyone at our conference who desires



their own table and thus their own platform for sharing their best practices regarding environmental education.

We are finalizing the details for the submission process, but expect that we will have to make sure the more for-profit tables are located in a sponsorship area.

If you would like to present at the conference, please send an email to [eeai@eeai.org](mailto:eeai@eeai.org).

## **One Man's Perspective: Travels With Morris (Part 4—the finale) by Sam Carman**

Author's note: During the past 3 issues of CREED you were introduced to Morris, an acquaintance I made in 2009. The year before, Morris began an amazing journey—one that is being shared with you through my ghostwriting of this series of articles. So without further ado, I'll turn it over to Morris.....

Hello again! In the last CREED issue I revealed that I am not human, but rather a bug--a Geocaching Travel Bug. As you might recall, my destiny was to make a round-trip from my original home in Florida all the way to Maricopa County, Arizona, and back again. If you've been following along in this series of articles, you know that my journey has been anything but direct!

Since my trip began in 2008 I have resided in 19 U.S. states (some multiple times) and 3 Canadian provinces. In less than a year I had achieved my goal of visiting the Morristown benchmark in Maricopa County, Arizona and making it back to Florida. I was within a few days of being retrieved by the Geocacher who originally launched me on my excursion when fate took over, in the form of two middle school lads from Danville, Indiana. These two young Geocachers were in Florida on spring break when they found me hidden in a St. Petersburg geocache, and brought me back with them to hide in a Hendricks County, Indiana cache. From there, I was retrieved by the ghostwriter of this series of articles (the guy whose name appears in the byline) and placed in an Ohio cache not far from I-75 (a major travel route to Florida) in hopes of hastening my return south. That strategy worked—sort of. I made it back to Florida on July 18, 2010; but by November I was on my way back to Arizona!

Since that time I have logged thousands of miles and gone back and forth across the United States before finally landing in Quebec, Canada in December of 2011. Aside from a few brief visits back to the States, I've resided somewhere in Canada ever since—still longing for the Gulf breeze of Florida.

As of this writing, I have logged more than 52,260 miles and have still not made it back home to the Florida panhandle—but that's OK. In my travels throughout the North American continent, I've experienced landscapes of unparalleled beauty and diversity. I hope my stories have inspired you to get outdoors and find what makes the natural environment in YOUR backyard special, and maybe travel to some distant

lands and explore their backyards! As they say here in Quebec, "Est pas la nature grandiose!" (Ain't nature grand!) Au Revoir.....Morris.

Conclusion (by ghostwriter Sam Carman): If you'd like to continue to follow the amazing journey of Morristown Benchmark Micro Geocoin (as of this writing at 52,262 miles and still travelling), go to <http://www.geocaching.com/track/details.aspx?id=857632>. And if you'd like to start your own adventures in Geocaching, I highly recommend it! You can pick up a starter GPS device for less than \$100, then go to <http://www.geocaching.com>, set up a free account and get started.

I have been what you might call a "casual Geocacher" since 2006. I've logged about 300 caches which is a pittance compared to more serious Geocachers whose numbers are in the thousands. But it has been a fun and fascinating hobby that has led me to some interesting sites in 18 states and allowed me to participate in a number of national events including International Geocaching Day and Geocaching Get Outdoors Day (hey, that sounds like something an environmental educator might get into!).



Perhaps my biggest Geocaching thrill now is introducing the hobby to a future generation of our family (see photo). My grandsons have taken to Geocaching like fish to water. I must say they are pretty good at it, often spotting the cache before I do. And the best part is that it brings us together to explore the great outdoors. It just doesn't get any better!

## **Envirothon – Then and Now by Darci Zoleman**

Many EEAI members have become familiar with Indiana Envirothon over the years, as volunteers, test writers, judges, team sponsors or advisors. Where did Envirothon get its start? It has its roots in Pennsylvania in 1979. Soil and Water Conservation Districts created an Environmental Olympics as a way to encourage high school students to become interested in natural resource conservation, as well as, environmental issues and careers. The program was well received and by 1987, there were 40 teams competing at the Pennsylvania State Envirothon contest, providing greater visibility and interest from neighboring states.

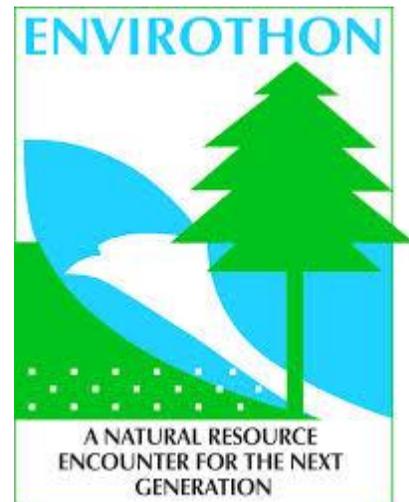
In 1988, the program changed its name to Envirothon and teams from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Massachusetts competed at the first National Envirothon Contest. More states continued to come on board and in 1992, a team from Nova Scotia, Canada

also competed, making the contest a multi-national event.

Envirothon continues to grow. In 2015, 51 teams from 44 U.S. states and 7 Canadian provinces competed at the North America Envirothon, held at Missouri State University.

The North American Envirothon is now a program of the National Conservation Foundation and is referred to as the NCF-Envirothon. Sponsorship for the program is from local conservation districts, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, Forestry Associations and the National Association of Conservation Districts.

Each year the Envirothon touches and positively influences the lives of more than 500,000 young people across the country. That number will continue to grow as additional states become involved. More and more inquiries are made of the host state each year. Inquiries have come from around the world including states, provinces, Mexican states, and countries such as Turkey, Japan, and Australia. The Envirothon is truly becoming International in scope. Thanks to dedicated volunteers, staff of cooperating agencies, teachers and advisors, enthusiastic students, and valuable support from sponsors, the Envirothon has proven to be an exciting and useful tool for incorporating environmental education into high school classrooms.



In 2016, Indiana will be celebrating its 25th anniversary of participating in this renowned event for high school students by hosting seven regional contests and one state competition. To learn more, contact Indiana Envirothon President Darci Zolman, <mailto:darci.zolman@in.nacdnet.net>.

