

Conservation Corner

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We had a great time at Jr. Naturalist Camp last week – time well spent interconnecting with Nature’s Building Blocks. We touched on the basic building blocks of atoms and the periodic table of elements before beginning our major construction project – prairie, woodland, and wetland habitat blocks with their interconnecting bricks of plants, insects, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals.

On Tuesday the campers enjoyed a scavenger hunt of ancient building blocks in the park as they followed clues to find fossils, collect Lego bricks, and construct a dinosaur or shark. We learned more about the life cycles and stories of butterflies, frogs, and trees as well as their connection to food chains, webs, and pyramids through stacking blocks, human pyramids, as well as wooden blocks and magic folding cubes complete with nature photos.

On Wednesday we discovered more bricks in each habitat, including our own box turtle and fox snake of the reptile family. In the park, campers experienced the results when specific bricks go missing in Giant Jenga and Kerplunk games. We hope everyone enjoys their Lego Monarch caterpillars, sculptures, fridge magnets, and key chains.

The highlight of our week was our field trip to Reimen Gardens and the colorful plantings and gardens that are home this summer to 13 of Sean Kenney’s LEGO® sculptures. Some of our favorite sculptures included the Peacock in the Hughes Conservatory (68,827 bricks), the Roseate Skimmer Dragonfly at Lake Helen (27,788 bricks), the Herd of Deer in the Penkhus Campanile Garden (84,442 bricks), and the Corn Spider that hung in the rafters of the Corn Crib at Jischke Children’s Garden (16,492 bricks). Other favorite activities included viewing the specimen and emergence cases at the Butterfly Lab and the magical atmosphere of the Christina Reiman Butterfly Wing.

For lunch we drove to McFarland Park where we enjoyed a picnic by the pond, toured the Story County Conservation Center, and explored some of the many trails through the woods and prairie along the South Skunk River. Everyone appreciated the great lunches provided by the Summer Lunch program at PAC Café.

Pocahontas Conservation would like to thank everyone who helped build our camp this summer. We appreciate each and every construction worker: PCCB staff who cut and sanded hundreds of blocks for our Jenga game and crafts; station leaders Lisa Zeman, Amy Hubbell, and Aden Ford; field trip supervisors Carla Coon, Joni Gerdes, Jill Hubbell, Lori Pedersen, Brenda Reis, Jeanne Sindergard, and Jeff Halder, who also served as our bus driver; as well as station and field trip leaders Brooklyn, Jacob, Nicole, Tyse, Zach, and Shannon. We couldn’t have built it without you!

I’ll close with a quote by Nathaniel Hawthorne that came to mind as I watched our two-year old grandson Caleb giggle and jump with joy amid the colorful butterflies. “Happiness is a butterfly which when pursued is always just beyond your grasp, but which, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you.”

