Forest School! at Cumming Nature Center

A parent handbook for learning in the outdoors
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Introduction

Cumming Nature Center

Cumming Nature Center (CNC) is a dynamic, 900-acre environmental education facility that celebrates the unique landscape and culture of the Finger Lakes region through experiential learning opportunities and thoughtful exhibits. Educational programming at CNC explores the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. These programs are designed to inspire innovative thinking among participants and provide them with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to take action in the face of local, regional, and global challenges.
Rochester Museum and Science Center

Enjoy discovering all the wonderful opportunities for you, your family, and your colleagues here at the RMSC. We promise to stimulate your interest in exploration.

Through 200 hands-on exhibits, spectacular shows, and authentic collections, you’ll uncover the wonders of our region, our world, and beyond. Make family memories through themed programs that spark interest in science, technology, engineering, and math. Climb a wall, build robots, zap lasers, launch a catapult, and zoom through space—there’s so much to experience.

Our 1.2 million collection items, many on display and online, are bursting with stories. Reveal Rochester’s rich history of innovation and immerse yourself in the machines, ingenuity, and natural occurrences that formed our world today. Expect to immerse all five senses in extensive experiential learning opportunities. Through our passion for lifelong learning, we want to inspire our patrons to turn their dreams of becoming an astronaut, being a well-informed citizen, or being the next great inventor into a reality.

CNC Forest School Mission

Our mission is to provide an emotionally and physically safe environment to cultivate a lifelong appreciation for the nature. We nurture the intrinsic connection between children and the natural world through unstructured play and seasonally adapted exploratory learning. Through forest school students learn to be resilient, self-reliant and confidently inquisitive.

Curriculum and Our Approach

In the Center: The Flame in Each Child

The Child’s Direct Connection to The Natural World

The Child’s direct connection to the natural world is the primary relationship we consider. Information does not flow from nature to adult to child. The child directly interacts with and feels part of nature. If we see this connection as a small flame, then we picture that all of the work we (parents, teachers, volunteers, nature center) do is an attempt to kindle, feed and protect this fire. This clarifies our task, so we are not introducing the child to nature as if they were strangers, but instead trusting that the child is on his or her path to a lifelong connection to the natural world, aided in part by our intention and support.
First Ring of Support: Protecting the flame
*Physical and Emotional Comfort and Safety*

We recognize that a cold, wet, nervous child is not going to build fairy houses or marvel over the wonders of the natural world. The first measures of support parents and the Cumming Nature Center Teachers can provide are comfort and safety, both physical and emotional.

1. **Physical Comfort: From Parents**
The parents' best contribution to forest school is to send the child with warmth, sustenance and permission to freely play (get dirty!). Dressing in appropriate clothing (see packing list), and toting hot food when necessary, are keys to a happy day.

2. **Physical Comfort: at Forest School**
The woods and the weather can be intimidating to anyone, and especially children. We want the children to feel at home, so we return to the same camp most weeks. A warm fire to rest by and warm their hands at becomes a central focus and sort of a check in point. Tea with honey is a comforting treat that we have most days, and can give a child something to do to when they feel a little disoriented and need to warm their hands. A hot water bottle inside a big wool sock becomes a hand oven. Parents also play an important role, not only with appropriate clothing and a healthy packed lunch, but by dropping off their children with confidence, supporting effective communication between teachers and their child, and supporting their experiences in Forest School with a positive attitude acknowledging their joys, as well as their challenges.

3. **Emotional Comfort: Dignity and Respect**
It is important that teachers are able to maintain authority in our groups. We strive to earn this by honoring the dignity of each child and respecting the hard work they are doing just by being out in the elements, spending a day in the woods with us. Knowing that the weather and unfamiliarity can be a challenge in and of itself, we approach discipline with positive statements, gentle redirection, and a supportive presence. Positivity is a key element to holding the space for the children to feel comfortable exploring. If your mittens get soaked, this is not an inconvenience, but seen as a critical part of learning about the world. Wet mittens are met with “Wow! You sure had fun in that mud, huh!? Good thing you brought extras!”

4. **Physical and Emotional Safety: Presence of Caring and Knowledgeable Adults**
Teachers are a listening presence, there to make each child feel comfortable to ask questions, to participate at his or her own comfort level, to foster the type of group dynamics where no one feels embarrassed to say that something is new to them. Our reflection activities include group
songs to highlight special memories and gratitude from the day, and others like “Rose, Bud and Thorn” which allows each child to share something they liked, something they’d like to try or do more of, and something they didn’t like. Their reflections have very much shaped the program.

Most important is the physical safety of the children. Teachers carry at all times: a radio to the center, a first aid kit, and access to all the children’s emergency contact info and allergies, etc… Above all the things we try to do each day, we obsessively count heads and avoid danger. Our teacher-student ratio of 1:5 exceeds national standards.

So, What are the Grownups Doing?
*Purposeful Work, Observation, and Exploration*

While the children settle into their play, teachers are holding the space, fostering three things: purposeful work, observation, and exploration. We are introducing the children to outdoor culture. We take care of camp and everyone’s needs, we make time to notice the beautiful world unfolding around us, and we head out to explore all that’s beyond our little camp.

**Purposeful Work**
The adults engage in purposeful work that children will become curious about. This might be carving sticks, sawing wood, gathering wood, building a shelter, cooking, making tea, etc… With an eye always toward safety, we allow the children to work with a folding saw while an adult stands next to them, or to carefully work on carving a stick with one-on-one adult supervision. This purposeful work allows us to move in and out of the children’s play, keeping a barometer on how everyone is doing without seeming to interrupt them. Children will often jump into our work when they seem to need a break, and then incorporate back into the group’s imaginative play. The work the children are able to do contributes to their sense of place and community. Unlike other environmental education models, which might treat the child as an observer in a teacher led way, Forest School helps children identify and occupy useful space in the magical and natural world around them by interacting with their surroundings in very self-directed and experiential ways.

**Observation**
Observation during playtime can be as simple as pointing out the geese overhead and listening for their wingbeats as they cruise in and out of the fog. It might be more specific, like bringing egg cartons and gathering different types of soil to compare. Teachers wouldn’t necessarily call
the whole group’s attention away from play to observe something (unless it is REALLY cool) but little observations we make together with a few children here or there are among the most poignant moments of our day, as well as building blocks for our budding naturalists.

Exploration
Each day, one or two teachers will head off to explore with a smaller group of children for an hour or two. Age appropriate learning adventures provide an opportunity for quiet and reflection, to see a new spot in the woods or to revisit a familiar place and practice observation. One group of older children may explore concepts surrounding woods knowledge, ecology, science, or survival skills, while children in the younger group walk their own journey of discovery in a playful and meaningful way. We are usually graced with signs of animals and various natural wonders.). Teachers are there to be a knowledgeable mentor. While we answer questions and notice things with them, we understand that it is far more effective to let a child come to a conclusion on their own, and try to make space for them to do this.

Daily Rhythm

Second Ring of Support: Feeding the Flame
Nurturing the Child’s Experience with Meaningful, Soulful Activities and Play

A predictable rhythm allows the children to know what to expect and feel part of something familiar and comforting. Repetition of familiar songs, characters from stories who show up again -- all of these elements help the child to feel this experience is truly their own. We make plenty of time for play and projects. And we know when to stop for tea, songs, mindfulness and stories. This makes sure that there is a chance for children to regroup, to go inward a bit and to quietly take in everything around them. We strive to get to a place each semester where transitions are few and seamless, and the children know just what to expect. One of the benefits of lots of time spent outdoors is the joy of being part of a tradition and community, we hope the children begin to feel this here at Cumming Nature Center.
“Otter Camp” Forest Preschool (for ages infant - 4 with caregiver)
*10:00 a.m. to noon
September - December (fall only)
Activities, Free Play, and Structure

Toddler Forest School provides parents and their young children with natural space to nurture their relationship through unstructured play, curiosity-driven learning, hands-on projects and basic outdoor skill awareness. Outdoor play allows the children to honor their strong developmental need to jump, twist, tug, pull, balance, roll, run, climb, dig, sort, build, weave and create. This play also develops fine and gross motor skills, executive function, spatial awareness, balance, coordination, kindness, and empathy. Forest preschool encourages students to be resilient, self-reliant and confidently inquisitive while preparing they and their families for the adventures awaiting in the longer day of regular Forest School.

Forest School recognizes the intrinsic relationship between children and nature. Each day will feature stories and themes that invite you and your child to explore beneath the arms of tall wise pines, to find comfort in connection and community, delight in the fresh air, squish in the mud, be creative or sit back and observe, enjoying songs and nature play under the gentle guidance and cheerful support of our knowledgeable educator. Each week during the changing autumn season brings new wonders to delight in for both caregiver and child.

After noon, caregivers who have other children in Forest School may use the Nature Center, hike on their own, or leave until pick-up -- it’s up to you!

“What do parents owe their young that is more important than a warm and trusting connection to the Earth...?”
– Theodore Roszak, The Voice of the Earth

Younger Forest School Children roughly ages 5-8
(“Chick-a-dees”)
Activities, Play, and Projects

Up to about age seven, a child is learning most effectively through play and with bucket loads of imagination and movement! We do not expect the younger children to sit still for much! Example activities include stories, songs, games, work, adventures, and free play. With some group activities at the beginning of the day, and usually a story and song at the end, the bulk of their day is spent in unstructured play.

Unstructured Play
Many children settle right into something imaginative; the big downed tree is affectionately referred to as “the train,” and the mud area is a factory. To support this type of play, we often “strew” things about. A strategically placed basket of pine cones, a rope, shovel or bucket gives them the simple props they need to let their imaginations run wild. Digging under roots, squishing mud between their fingers, building fairy houses, stacking frozen ice heaves into castles… This simple play teaches much more than we could with words, and it is the pinnacle of the young child’s experience at Forest School. Free outdoor play also allows the child to honor the strong developmental need to jump, twist, tug, pull, balance, roll, run, climb, dig, sort, build, weave, and create. They work together, using their strong imaginations and ideas to sort out all types of social situations with each other. We witness them problem-solve to make it all work the way they envision. It might look like nothing, but this type of play is developing both fine and gross motor skills, executive function, spatial awareness, kindness and empathy, balance and coordination. The cognitive benefits of outdoor play are immeasurable.

Although experiencing what it is like to step wet feet into an icy cold stream, or use a hot water bottle to keep warm on a blustery day, are valuable for sensory and cognitive development, younger Forest Schoolers (“chickadees”) will leave the Village for the Nature Center after lunch on days in the low 20s or when the wind chill is bitter (*see Severe Winter Weather). Afternoons on such bitter cold days will be spent playing fun games, hearing stories beside the cracking fire downstairs at CNC, opening animal tracking boxes, doing crafts and if everyone seems warm and happy -- possibly heading back outside for short stints of winter play!

Older Forest School Children roughly ages 7/8 and up (“Wolves”)

Around age seven, a child seems to be “awakening.” At this point, the children join the older group and begin to have their attention called more clearly to the processes going on in the natural world. While the under seven child is learning primarily through play, the over seven child is learning primarily through hands-on, inquiry-based learning. This format sets the stage for increased mentoring of the child’s curiosity, opportunity to actively inquire how things work, and a foundational connection with the human and ecological community.

Our older forest schoolers, being both observant and playful, take a closer look at the complex relationships in the natural world. Having grown in experience and competence regarding personal needs in the outdoors, these children are far less likely to need to discover how getting wet might feel in the cold, or how certain actions affect their body needs. Wolves are better able to stay warm, consider possible outcomes of their actions, and apply their growing skills in the outdoors to benefit themselves and their community. Wolves also enjoy examining the changing seasons through guided hikes, continuing their skill building, and curriculum-based adventure.

Purposeful Work, Observation, and Exploration
The older child’s understanding of nature and science are deepening. Their foundation as has made them comfortable in the elements. The trees, soils, mud, creeks are familiar by now. They know what a cold, wet boot feels like, what different soils and sands feel like in their hands, what plants come up first, and how to build a fire. They are ready to be challenged in new ways!

Activities are still driven by the group’s curiosity and a desire to nurture people to be lifelong lovers of the outdoors; still rooted in ideas of invisible teaching and sharing knowledge through community, work, exploration, and time spent with mentors.

**Fanning the Flame**
At the core of the “Wolves” philosophy is that Nature is the teacher. Within a natural setting, children are thus given the freedom to explore themselves and their world. We foster self-direction, stoke curiosity, celebrate resourcefulness, and treasure compassion. We support the children individually and collectively in building their skills, social development, resilience, and understanding of the natural world while building on their sense of place. Activities are always infused with adventure, inquiry, and imagination in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

To be truly child-centered we harness the unique qualities of natural learning and provide authentic experiences with challenging and achievable goals in a manner that is play-based and patient. Older children will also dive into hands-on science activities, practice reflection in their journals, and venture further into woods wisdom. Teachers continue to demonstrate that it’s fun to contribute to community, and may ask for more of the older children in these roles. It is our hope that this mentality helps develop a child’s sense of self, sense of confidence, and sense of community, while building on a deepening relationship with the environment.
Forest School Daily Rhythm

9:45-10:00 am -- sign in and drop off at the Nature Center -- entire school hikes to The Village group site, building on our excitement for the day, noticing the seasonal changes, and maybe taking on the Gatekeeper Challenge!

10:30 -- All group morning circle with songs and announcements

Morning -- Free Play and Mentor Activities (crafts, skills, games)

Noon -- lunch and storytelling

Afternoon break out sessions -- Younger and Older group Explorations and Guided Adventures

2:30 -- Re-gather for snack, tea, closing songs, community sharing, clean-up and then final pack up!

3:15 - 3:30 -- Walk back to the Nature Center for pick up

Each week the Forest School Teachers rotate through the roles of Circle Keeper, Hearth Keeper (who also does snack), Mentor (2 mentors weekly for crafts, skills, or games), Woods Watcher (no other duties but to focus entirely on the kids), Storyteller and Gatekeeper (a mindfulness guided suggestion for the walk in to the Village, taken on by the Woods Watcher).

Drop-Off/Pick-Up Instructions

Our day begins promptly at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. just outside the nature center’s north doors. Drop-Off should occur between 9:45 and 9:55 am. Please be sure to sign your child in! Late drop offs will require that the parent walk their child out to Village -- after signing your child in first. Pick-up is also outside the north CNC doors; parents are welcome to stay and mingle but are then the responsible adults for their children at that time. Thank you!

Packing List

One of forest school participants’ major achievements is experiencing and enduring the outdoors year-round. Our hands-on programs take place in all types of weather and usually require that we fully immerse ourselves in the environment. It is essential that children come prepared for the day’s weather and with the understanding that it is ok to get dirty! Comfort and proper clothing are of utmost importance. Staying warm and dry in the outdoors will enhance your child’s learning experience. The list below is cold-weather specific and can be adjusted for warmer months.
Please bring the following items to every session:
- Backpack
- Water bottle (thermos in colder weather for warm drinks)
- Snack
- Lunch
- Naturalist Notebook (will be provided)

What to Wear (NO cotton in cool or damp weather):

Head:
- Hat (in colder weather, one that covers the ears)
- Scarf or neck gaiter

Torso:
- Base layer (wool or synthetic recommended)
- Middle layer shirt (wool or fleece recommended)
- Raincoat or windbreaker (when needed)
- Down coats are great when used with a shell layer

Legs:
- Base layer (wool or synthetic recommended)
- Middle layer fleece recommended (if needed)
- Pants (wool or water resistant recommended)
- Outer pant (rain pants optional but can keep your child dry). One popular solution are the rain pants with suspenders similar to these: [https://www.amazon.com/Playshoes-Unisex-Baby-Kids-Pants/dp/B00TEUA2XW](https://www.amazon.com/Playshoes-Unisex-Baby-Kids-Pants/dp/B00TEUA2XW)
- Snow suit in winter!

Feet:
- Socks (base layer)
- Over Socks (bigger)
- Waterproof boots for muddy and wet conditions
- Snow boots when needed

Hands:
- Mittens or gloves in colder weather (double layer with waterproof outer shell works great)
- at least one extra pair of mittens
- Thin, non-cotton, lunch gloves for cold days. These enable your child to handle food items and still keep their fingers warm.

Bug and Sun Care
- A brimmed hat is one of the best defenses against sun and buzzing bugs!
- Consider both the child and the environment when deciding on insect deterrents. Those containing pyrethrins or DEET are highly effective, but should never be used on children’s skin. Note that long lasting pyrethrins, sprayed on boots and pants, can be just as effective, but can also be hazardous to aquatic life if freshly sprayed (for example, that morning). Please read cautionary labels. Many safe and natural bug sprays are available! Ask us for suggestions if you are unsure!
• Another great way to stay protected is with clothing. Keeping covered with long sleeves, long pants (and boots or socks over pants) and a wide brim hat, are very safe and effective methods for dealing with both sun and bugs!

• A spring day when no leaves are on the trees, or even a sunny winter day, can expose your child to too much sun. Zinc-based, and other, sunscreens are suggested.

• Although we have not seen very many ticks at CNC it is always recommended to do a thorough tick check after school! Removing a tick early and safely is a great defense against tick borne illness. Always safe the tick in a zip-lock bag to have for testing if necessary.

Dressing in layers is a good way to stay warm in the colder months. Stay away from cotton fabric in cooler weather (which is most of the year around here). When cotton gets wet, it will NOT keep your child warm.

All Forest Schoolers need to have a change of clothes that we can keep in totes at the Village.

Preschool Forest Schoolers should also have a change of clothes each day, despite the shorter daily session. These outfits can be carried by their caregivers.

What (else) to Leave at Home

Please do NOT send electronic devices or potentially hazardous objects. On occasion, tools, including lock-blade knives, may be appropriate but must be shown to a teacher and used in the Cutting Circle area. Always check with an instructor before sending a tool out into the woods with your child.

Bringing toys from home is discouraged. Personal toys can get dirty and broken and may cause problems when others want to play with them. Better yet -- if you child would like to bring a doll, truck, or horse -- they can let us know and we could try making one out of natural materials. The forest holds cordage materials, acorns, wood, sticks (there are hundreds of things to do with a stick!) mud, bark, leaves and so many things for your child to play with! Encourage your child that their beloved toy will be waiting when they get home, but they can create a toy at Forest School.

We do make exceptions for sleds and skis if we have appropriate conditions and space to use them.

Volunteers
Forest School welcomes volunteers on an as-needed basis but ideally for a full season or year. Our volunteers have made wonderful contributions over the past couple of years and greatly influenced everyone’s joy and development. Teen volunteers who are willing and able to engage with younger children, work alongside teachers, and participate fully as role models are a wonderful asset to the program! Many volunteers have special skills to offer -- we are always looking for photographers, heavy lifters, or the ability to while building a friction fire and singing our newest song!

Volunteers should keep in mind that this is a child-centered program and that conversations in and around the Village should strive to keep this in mind with a focus on being in the moment (it's good for you!). Interested? Contact information is available under Communications. We'd love to hear from you!

**Trusting in the Journey of Outdoor Competence**

We trust that you send your child to Forest School understanding that your child will have the freedom to challenge themselves in the outdoor setting; freedom to push their edges, stretch their motor skills, and test their confidence and resilience all under the watchful gaze and supportive guidance of their teachers. At Forest School, expect that your child will: climb trees while also learning how to judge the safety of a tree branch, build and feed fires while also gaining respect and appreciation for the powerful heat and smoke such a wonder provides, get wet in the creek while developing a deeper connection to all their senses, use fixed blade knives and hand saws with supervision and instruction within the Cutting Circle, build shelters with logs and limbs, and so much more. Such activities do contain risks. Forest School teachers are here to help children navigate the many paths that lead to confidence and ability in the outdoors through the lenses of safety, mindful awareness, and skill building. Our goal is to reflect your trust in good measure to the very best of our abilities.
Conflict Resolution

At Forest School we support students to respect themselves, each other, and the Earth. We recognize that these are skills young children are just beginning to acquire and our goal is to role model, coach, and facilitate them. We use reminders and logical consequences to manage conflict through empathy, self-control, talking and listening, and seeking agreement.

An example of a logical consequence for us is to remove a child from a specific activity if he or she is having trouble participating appropriately. In this case, we suggest something else for the child to participate in and, depending on the situation, might also suggest some quiet time in their own spot, or at the Peace Tree. If, after some coaching, your child constantly has difficulty meeting any of our basic expectations we will let you know so we can all put our heads together about how best to support your child. We would also inform you—during program hours if appropriate—if there is behavior that could be a danger to your child or others. If the behavior is extreme or repeated, or the child is unable to discuss it with us, we reserve the right to temporarily separate the child from the program.

Severe Cold - when is it too cold to be out all day?

Forest School teachers demonstrate that when prepared with knowledge and skills about the outdoors, and/or when well-fed and properly clothed, one can be comfortable and confident in the outdoors! Although we desire all of our students to develop a love for the outdoors in all the myriad types of weather, we want to be certain that our youngest schoolers are given the time and nurturing necessary to build their skills and abilities in more severe conditions. Because of this, younger children will head back to CNC on days in the low 20s and below (or when the windchill makes a 25 degree day one in the teens). At the Nature Center they will have opportunities for indoor games, discovery animal boxes, crafts, and stories. Younger children brought inside may have shorter excursions back outdoors when possible. Older children (“Wolves”) will be staying out for the duration of the day unless conditions are extreme. Forest School will follow the general weather guidelines for children, put out by the Iowa Dept of Health, found here: https://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/weatherwatchforchildren2.pdf
**Weather-Related Closing**

We follow the Naples School District’s decisions on inclement weather. If Naples Schools are closed, so is Forest School. See the Communication section below for contact information.

**Health and Medical**

Our instructors have first aid training and carry first aid kits, teachers are informed of your child’s medical information. If your child requires medication and you cannot provide it before the day begins, let us know so that special arrangements can be made.

Scraped knees, nicks and bumps are cared for at the Village camp. Our approach is that little events are part of the learning process. All minor injuries are met with assurance and cleanliness, and encouragement with your child’s ability to have confidence in themselves. Teacher’s will discuss any minor injuries with parents at the end of the day. Any injury involving a bump on the head or one of any other concern, will initiate a call home to parents via the Nature Center. Such a call home does not deem an emergency, or that a child needs immediate pick-up, but that you, the parent, have time to make any decisions regarding care before you arrive for pick-up.

The Forest School program can be physically demanding for little ones. Please be aware when deciding if your child is well enough to attend, that a child unable to participate fully due to illness will have a negative experience and requires a greater share of instructor time and attention. We unfortunately do not have the staff resources to nurse a sick child. If your child becomes unwell we will keep him or her comfortable and call you to come pick him or her up.

**Communication**

Periodically, we send out group emails regarding upcoming activities, cancellations, or other pertinent information. Please contact CNC Staff with any questions, comments or concerns you have. We value your feedback and appreciate the opportunity to grow.

**Nathan Hayes**
Director of the Cumming Nature Center  
Email: nhayes@rmsc.org  
CNC Phone: 585-374-6160  
Nathan’s Cell: 585-410-5489 (only for texts on day of the program)

Forest School Communications  
Angela Cannon-Crothers  
585-794-7597
Meet the Forest School Teachers!

Alex Szuba comes to us with a Wildlife Science degree from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and a hefty background in primitive skills/outdoor education, says Alex, "I'm so glad that I've been able to become a part of Cumming's Nature Center Forest School! I have had the privilege to pursue many skills that connect us to our environment, and have been practicing and teaching them in Syracuse, Ithaca, and Rochester. Along my journey, I've found that my inspiration to teach comes not from the skills themselves, but from the shorter, more spontaneous bunch we call The Children. Upon meeting them for the first time a few weeks ago, I felt so welcomed as I was guided to many of the real and mythical locations around Forest School. I'm excited to step into the role of a teacher and mentor to these open-armed and open-minded kiddo's, and I know that they have a lot to teach me too!"

-Alex

Angela Cannon-Crothers: Teacher Angie is a former cloud collector, glacier-side botany research assistant, and US Forest Service naturalist and wilderness ranger (among other things!). She holds degrees in ecology, environmental science, and teaching certification as well as a M.S. in Environmental Education and Interpretation from the University of Wisconsin. Angie is a spinner of tales and texts whose publications include regional and national magazines, anthology inclusions, a novel, a children's book, a non-fiction book on herbs and seasonal celebrations, and two poetry awards. She has been
publishing a monthly nature column for over a decade in *Lake Country Weekender* and *Neapolitan*. She has been working Finger Lakes Community College as an instructor for Soils and Environmental Science. A mother with twenty-five years of experience as an outdoor educator, program director, and camp director at centers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, New Hampshire and Vermont, joining Forest School at Cumming Nature Center in 2016 has been by far the most intriguing and inspiring program she has been involved in; one that causes her to marvel at the wild children she gets to interact with, and the mysterious magic of a perfect fit.

My name is **Leif Jensen** and after a year of volunteering I am excited to be an official instructor at Forest School! I am nature loving and I like working with kids. I hope to teach survival skills in a way that is fun and interesting for even the youngest. I am a homeschooler myself, taking online college classes while I finish high school. I am also a photographer so expect many photos on the forest school Facebook page. Five words to describe me might be: energetic, curious, supportive, positive, and confident.

Haley Pasquale: Teacher Haley has been working with wild children on-and-off while intermittently attending university for the past 8 years. Her excitement for this work came when her little siblings (twins!) were born. Beside caring for them, she has been a busy babysitter, worked at a local childcare center, been a live-in nanny for two young girls, worked for two nature-connection-based summer camps (Living Earth School in VA, Camp Kaniksu in ID), and worked as a
substitute teacher at a local public school. Other work experience she’s had the past few years includes farming, landscaping, and tutoring. She has an A.S. in Liberal Arts & Sciences with an Environmental Studies concentration, and has been working toward her B.A. in Global Studies (which included a session in Cambodia) with an Environmental Studies concentration. She started at CNC in May 2018. We have also been told she recently returned from camping in the Adirondacks with her family and ate frog legs!

**OTTER CAMP FOREST PRESCHOOL**

Andrea Burgess: Hello my name is Teacher Andrea and I am a naturalist and mother. Everything intrigues me about ecology and the natural world. I am a graduate of Paul Smith College and have continued many independent studies in herbalism, mycology, ornithology, botany and Tinkergarten. I have three daughters and live in the Bristol hills. What excites me most about Otter Camp is sharing in your child's discovery and joy in nature. The pure excitement and curiosity these little ones have is unbridled. When we allow children to simply play outside we can observe how children learn naturally and encourage their individual growth and development. I am so looking forward to meeting you and your little ones!

**2018-2019 Calendar**

Fridays | 10:00am-3:30pm

Fall: Fridays, September 7 through December 14 (except November 23) and January 4 through May 24 2019.
Spring: Fridays, January 4 through May 31 (except February 22, March 22, March 29 and April 19)

Songs and Quotes

Songs

**I Love the Mountains**
I love the mountains, I love the rolling hills
I love the flowers, I love the daffodils
I love the fireside when all the lights are low
A boom-di-ada, boom-di-ada, boom di-ada, boom di-ada
boom

**Earth My Body**
Earth, My Body
Water, My Blood
Air, My Breath
Fire, My Spirit

I am the Earth, walking
I am the Air, talking
I am the water, flowing
I am the fire, glowing

**We’re all a family**
We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)
We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)

(children make verses reflecting on that day, and everyone repeats) example:
Dante: I saw a squirrel  ALL: Dante saw a squirrel
Elder: We found teeny tiny acorns ALL: We found teeny tiny acorns
Teacher: Violet lead us deep into the woods! ALL: Violet led us deep into the woods!
Ernie: And we saw a mother Robin ALL: and we saw a mother Robin

We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)
We’re all a family under one sky, we’re a family under one sky (clap, clap)

Through the gate
Through the Gate, Into the pines, Our boots are muddy, our hearts are kind
(two go in middle and choose an activity to act out)
Building fires all day long, all day long, all day long, building fires all day long here at forest school (then put hands together like london bridge and everyone goes under while singing verse again)
Through the Gate, Into the pines, Our boots are muddy, our hearts are kind

I am a red pine
(Arms raised like the red pines, in two rows facing partner, making a “hallway”)
I am a red pine, tall and free, but a rooted tree I’ll always be
See the children down below, playing, running to and fro
(First two children pick something to do and skip, run, hop, etc… down the row)

Heya Ho
Tall trees
Deep water
Wide fields
Tiny puddles
I can feel it in my body, in my spirit in my soul
Heya heya heya heya heya heya heya ho

Cool breeze
Warm fire
Feel the rain
Drop of water
I can feel it in my body, in my spirit, in my soul
Heya heya heya heya heya heya heya ho
Heya heya heya heya heya heya heya ho
Heya heya heya heya heya heya heya ho
I can feel it in my body, in my spirit in my soul

Burn Fire Burn
Burn fire burn
Stoke your inner fire
Let to coal inside you rise
And blow that flame to life

The Fire
The fire from the sun
feeds the fire to the trees
feeds the fire that we light tonight
Fire, fire burning brightly heat shield us with your light

The Gnome Game
I Traveled (jump when you say this) FAR across the sea,
I met a gnome and old was he (stoop over and twirl beard)
I said to him “where do you live?” And this is what the gnome told me:
Follow me to the jumping land, the jumping land, (Everyone jumps from point a to point b)
the jumping land. If you wish to live with me, follow me to the jumping land.

Children take turns picking something to do (swimming, crawling, hopping, helicoptering, etc…)
good one to end with teacher saying "listening" and then to start the story.

Quotes
If I had influence with the good fairy that presided over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength. - Rachel Carson

If a young child has been able in his play… to give up his whole living being to the world around him…he will be able in the serious tasks of later life, to devote himself with confidence and power to the service of the world. - Rudolf Steiner

Children should not cull the fruits of reflection and observation early, but expand in the sun and let thoughts come to them. -Margaret Fuller Ossoli

I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parents seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to “know” as to “feel”. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow. -Rachel Carson

I have made no conscious effort to name plants or animals nor to explain to him, but have just expressed my own pleasure in what we see, calling his attention to this or that but only as I would share discoveries with an older person. Later I have been amazed at the way names stick in his mind… I am sure no amount of drill would have implanted the names so firmly as just going through the woods in the spirit of two friends on an expedition of exciting discovery. - Rachel Carson

As we get closer to nature, we find that the subject of our study is not actually nature at all, but life, and the nature of our own selves. - Joseph Cornell
The way kids learn to make good decisions is by making decisions, not by following directions.” - Alfie Kohn

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