

# THE AMAZING NEWS PAPER

October 1, 2009 - Issue 6



Foundation Board Members: Leah Bennett - Craig Bennett - Jim Bartel - Bud Bennett - Ryan Spencer - Rob Fisher - Beth Ardisana

If this is your first issue of The Amazing Newspaper, this was created to help spread the mission of the Spirit of Alexandria Foundation, founded in January of 2006. The Spirit of Alexandria Foundation was created to carry on the legacy of Alexandria Bennett, a little girl whose passion for nature and generosity was evident to everyone around her. Through this foundation it is her family and friends mission to help children experience nature and all its wonderment. The Spirit of Alexandria Foundation will work in cooperation with partners in the places close to home and across the country in order to achieve our mission.

In 2003, Alexandria (6 at the time), decided she wanted to write a newspaper. Her first report was on our neighbors swing set that a tree fell on. Also in the same issue was a report on "weeds". Alexandria took her own pictures and wrote her own stories. Her newspaper ran for one year, an issue a month.

The Amazing Newspaper will become a source for contributors, big and small, to learn about the Foundation's latest accomplishments and our future plans. Though she is missed more than words can express, her legacy will continue as long as there are people like you who believe in our Foundation.

## 2009 - A Year to Remember. Story by Craig Bennett

Awesome is the word I would use to describe the happenings of the foundation so far. At the beginning of 2009 our board members were doubtful of having our golf outing and it wasn't looking too good for our annual scholarships with businesses being very tight – donations were way down. Somehow, thanks to all the supporters, friends, family, etc. we have managed to put ourselves on the path to our most successful year. Scholarships were provided for the middle

school field ecology program to The Teton Science Schools, transportation was provided for the Eastern Shoshone tribe to revisit their heritage in Yellowstone National Park, the golf outing was a huge success, and to top it off, we have partnered with The Howell Nature Center, here in Michigan where we have provided a bus that has been converted to a mobile classroom. Read more detail about each accomplishment throughout the newspaper.

## 3rd Annual Spirit of Alexandria Golf Outing a Huge Success.

Story by Craig Bennett

Great weather set the stage for what was to be our biggest fundraiser to date. Once again it was held at the Wyndgate country club and our host Kevin Muir from the club was also again extremely accommodating. The Don Roberts team took 1st place and the team of Tony Pardo brought up the rear of the field. One of the many highlights involved the unveiling of our newest mobile classroom and our partnership formed with The Howell Nature Center. Among the activities beside golf, the Howell nature center brought out a couple birds of prey and other animals involved in their rehabilitation programs. This year we also added a live auction handled by Ted Christenson to go along with silent auction. At the end of the day the fundraiser took in over \$40,000. Well exceeding the first 2 events and far surpassing our goals set for this year.

We like to say a special thanks to our Angel sponsors Trans Air, Myer Motors and Tactical Transitions. We would also like to thank the volunteers that helped to make the outing run so smoothly. We look forward to an even more spectacular golf outing in 2010.



The winning 4-some with their first place trophies.



Tony Pardo and teammate accepting the last place trophy.



Brandon Deane with Barred Owl.



Dick Grant sharing nature center's opossum.

Visit us at: [www.spiritofalexandria.org](http://www.spiritofalexandria.org) • Write us at: 47451 Avante Dr. • Wixom, Michigan 48393

# Howell Nature Center & Spirit of Alexandria Connect Children to Nature in Michigan.

Story by Leah & Craig Bennett

In April of 2009, Craig and I approached The Howell Conference & Nature Center with a proposal for the use of a mobile classroom. We were not sure what the final product would be, we just knew that the foundation had a bus that wasn't being used for anything and that we wanted to get something started locally. We met with Dana DeBenham and Dick Grant, shared our vision, listened to their ideas and left with a great partnership.

Debating at our golf outing was the first step of what we hope to become a long relationship with the Howell Nature center. Alexandria's Nature bus was presented to all who attended.

Here is a brief history on the bus used for this project. Originally developed as a prototype and designed by Alexandria's Grandpa to be used in Yellowstone Park. Alexandria actually spent time during the development in Yellowstone touring the park in this very bus over the next couple of years the bus had disappeared into the system of retired used vehicles. Shortly after starting the foundation we were reunited with the bus after a family member found the bus going through an auction. The foundation quickly acquired it knowing the special history it has to our family and Alexandria.

Fast forward, the foundation and Howell Nature Center came up with the plan of turning the bus into a true mobile classroom. It would allow the nature center to set up programs that can be taken directly to the kids and their schools. First, all seating was removed from the inside of the bus and cabinets and counters where installed to provide stations where hands on displays, games ,etc can be used by the kids to learn about whatever program is being presented on the bus. One of the more exciting programs for the bus will be the birds of prey exhibit where kids will get to be up close and personal to the birds while learning about them. The next thing we had to do to the bus was to make the outside be as spectacular as the inside. Graphics and paint where applied to give it a true nature feel and one that would definitely represent Alexandria's personality; finally the name, Alexandria's Nature Bus.

We look forward to the development of this project. We are very proud of it and know it can give many children a chance to experience nature in new ways and even possibly for the first time.



Above: Alexandria's Nature bus unveiled at 3rd Annual Golf Outing. Below Left: Alexandria standing on the tracks of the Yellow Bus in Yellowstone - 2004. Below Right: Rear view of nature bus.



At left: Brandon Deane with nature center's Peregrine Falcon aboard nature bus.



Interior of Alexandria's Nature Bus at Howell's Melon Festival.

# Coincidence or Inspiration.

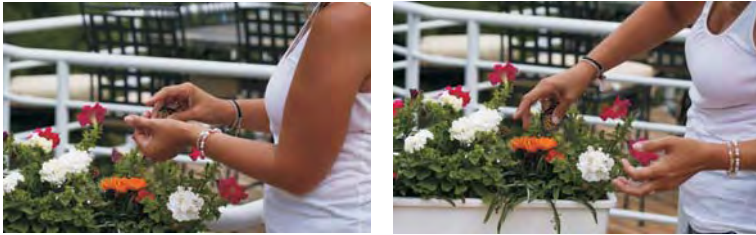
Story by Craig Bennett

Since the passing of Alexandria there have been so many signs and things that have happened that you know if you told someone they would give you that look of “yeah right”. I'll tell you about 2 recent occurrences for you to decide for yourself.

Leah and I raise and release Monarchs, just as Alexandria did; collecting eggs from milkweed plants and nurturing them into caterpillars, eventually into a chrysalis from there into a butterfly.

Our new house has a stream long the back of our lot. To our luck we have our own milkweed patch. One day while sitting on our deck, I watched a Monarch as it laid its egg on one of the plants. We collected the egg and placed it in our butterfly house. A few weeks later we had a butterfly. Leah and I did our normal routine - she carries the butterfly outside and I take pictures of releasing it.

This particular butterfly was special though. It was our first in



Above: Leah releasing Monarch.  
Below: Monarch resting on Craig's shirt.

our new house. I got some great pictures of the butterfly with Leah. Just as I finished it flew away - always a cool feeling. It flew away for about 30 seconds, this while I handed the camera to Leah. The next thing we saw was that it had flown back down and landed on my chest right next to the foundation logo on my shirt, . Maybe coincidence - but a very special day for Leah and I.

The next butterfly incident involved several people at my work - a very tough crowd.

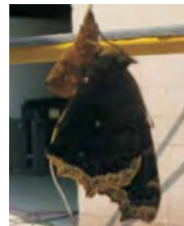
We had just received a car back from our paint shop and I noticed a chrysalis being formed on the tire of the car. I warned everyone to not move the car until the chrysalis was complete. I needed to tie it to another object so that it had a chance to become a butterfly. My directions were not followed and the car had been rolled through the entire shop to be washed with the chrysalis still attached.



At this point, co-worker and friend, Derrick, removed the formed chrysalis from the tire with dental floss and tied it to something outside the shop. A few days later a couple of the guys at work watched as a Mourning Cloak emerged. The butterfly hung on its chrysalis shell and eventually went on its way.

24 hours later, the Mourning Cloak was found on the wall outside my office, mind you that my office was 100' away from its chrysalis where it would have had to walk through the machine shop and other chaos going on in the shop as it was unable to fly. It had an obvious problem with its wing. I noticed that a piece of its chrysalis was stuck to the wing. We confirmed with the chrysalis outside, that it in deed was missing a piece. Leah removed the piece from the butterfly's wing, it then flew away only to return to her ankle before leaving. The butterfly was spotted flying around the back of the shop over the next couple of days before he left on his journey

Many of the people at work witnessed this sequence of events and see firsthand the inspiration that fills Leah and my lives.



Have you made your choice between coincidence and inspiration?



At left: Mourning Cloak still attached to chrysalis.  
Above: Mourning Cloak after chrysalis removed from wing.

# Unforgettable Experience.

Kiersten Ruen from Tongue River MS & Connor Krupa from CSA were both awarded scholarships to The Teton Science Schools.

Below is a letter from Connor Krupa about his trip.

Dear Spirit of Alexandria Foundation,

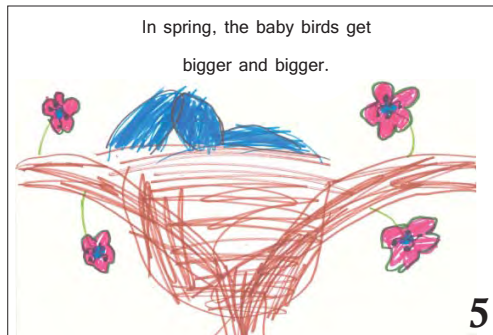
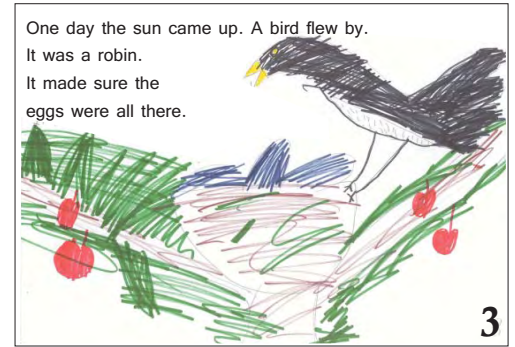
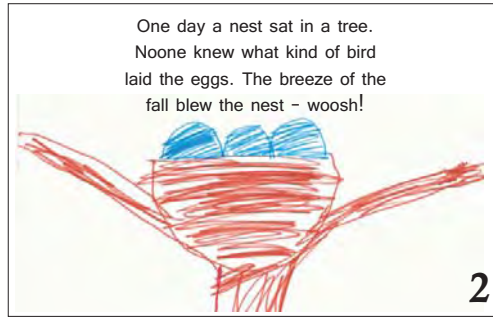
Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to go to the wonderful Middle School Field Ecology course at the Teton Science School in Wyoming. I really enjoyed it! Our days were busy and exciting including canoeing and lots of hiking. We learned about the dangerous increase in pine beetle populations and how this is affecting the ecosystems in the area and why. We also helped with bird banding. We helped bring the birds to the researchers. They were gathering information such as species and weight. We even got to hold them as they let them go. The variety of wildlife there was incredible. Sometimes you would even have to wait for the bison to move off the road. I even saw a bear, a moose, antelope, an elk, deer and birds. We even helped paint the trail ranger's building!

The entire experience was amazing, but my absolute favorite part was visiting Yellowstone. I saw Old Faithful, visited the Grand Prismatic and went to the Firehole River canyon. We learned that the colors of the Grand Prismatic are created by the bacteria that thrive in the extreme temperatures that exist in the hot springs. Speaking of hot springs, we all learned that the reason Yellowstone has so many hot springs, canyons and mountains is that the entire park is situated over a caldera which is essentially a giant, supervolcano. A caldera is formed by a hot spot underneath the earth's crust which stays where it is. However, the crust over the hot spot is moving slowly in one direction so the caldera's explosions in previous millennia have caused the Snake River plain. I learned that the Tetons are actually really young (for mountains) and that all of Jackson Hole slopes toward the Tetons.

Overall, this experience was something that I will never forget.

Sincerely,  
Connor Krupa

# The Eggs. Original story by Alexandria Bennett



# Mobile Classroom busy in Wyoming.

Story by Leah Bennett

The Mobile Classroom that is currently in Jackson, Wyoming was busy during the summer. For the third year now, the foundation supported the Cross Cultural Exchange Program with Yellowstone National Park. Members from the Eastern Shoshone Tribe participated this year. We plan on continuing to support the program with the park in 2010.



Wildlife Expeditions of Teton Science Schools had a couple of wonderful opportunities to use the Spirit of Alexandria Mobile Classroom just this past week.

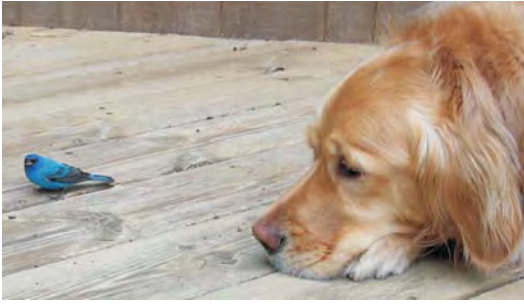
First, they partnered with the National Museum of Wildlife Art (NMWA) during their Western Visions Celebration. They did a mini-wildlife safari with 17 museums patrons, two artists, the education Director of the NMWA and two fabulous Wildlife Expeditions guides. It was a wonderful experience and opportunity to mix wildlife and art on a custom wildlife/scenic Expedition.

A couple days later TSS conducted a wildlife tour for Pfizer using the Spirit of Alexandria Bus. The 22 participants wanted it to be a bonding experience and opted not to use our smaller customized-safari vehicles, as they would have had to break up into 3 groups. They truly enjoyed the experience.

Both groups saw an abundance of wildlife on the tour and both had a number of positive comments on the Spirit of Alexandria Mobile Classroom. They mentioned how much they liked the big windows, comfortable seats, ease of getting on and off the vehicle, smooth ride and the generosity of those that donated it for use at Teton Science Schools.

The foundation is extremely happy with how Teton Science Schools has utilized the Red Bus and spread the foundation's mission. Because TSS does not regularly use the Red Bus through the winter months (a tad snowy), we will be bringing it back to Michigan where Howell Nature Center can use it during the school year for transporting students from schools to the nature center. Many schools cannot afford the transportation for field trips.

Several things will be done to the bus before it goes to the Howell Nature Center. The first will be to have it painted like Alexandria's Nature Bus as well as having similar graphics added to the exterior. This bus will be renamed to Alexandria's Nature Bus II and will travel back to Jackson Hole next June.



Carley and the bird / Photos by Janet Schwartz



Newlyweds Britt and Jeff Fuchs release 2 Monarchs after their ceremony.

**Calling all Naturalists.** Do you have a photo, a poem, story or a drawing relating to nature - we would like to include it in a future issue of The Amazing Newspaper. Whether you are 5 or 75, we want you to share the wonders around you with us and everyone who will read The Amazing Newspaper. Submit your nature experiences to the address below.

*Thank you to everyone who has submitted artwork, stories or photos for this issue.*

## Backyard Habitat.

Photos by Leah Bennett



Craig and I have included a few of the characters that have made our yard their home. **At left:** An Eastern Chipmunk made its self at home in the bird house, until our Cope's Gray Treefrog took up residence. **Above:** Wood Duck pair visiting in late spring. **Below:** A mama Mallard taking her ducklings up stream from our pond.



Apple Tree / Drawn by Kory Bennett



Fall / Drawn by Brooke Bennett



**Above:** A Blue Heron flying out of our pond with its lunch.