

THE AMAZING NEWS PAPER



November 1, 2008 - Issue 5

Foundation Board Members: Leah Bennett - Craig Bennett - Jim Bartel - Dick Rief - 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.

2nd Annual Golf Outing a Grand Success!

The 2nd Annual Spirit of Alexandria Open was even more successful than last years. We are happy to say that due to the generosity of sponsors and participants the foundation was able to raise \$35,000.

We would like to thank Takata, VIA and Tactical Transitions for their Angel sponsorships and event support. We also want to thank the volunteers that helped make the outing go smoothly and help to create an enjoyable event.

The foundation has secured a date for 2009 - Monday, July 13th - to be held at the Wyndgate. We hope that moving the outing a week after July 4th, that more people will have the opportunity to attend the 3rd Annual Spirit of Alexandria Open.



(Above) First place trophy winner - Tim Healy

(Left) Last place team

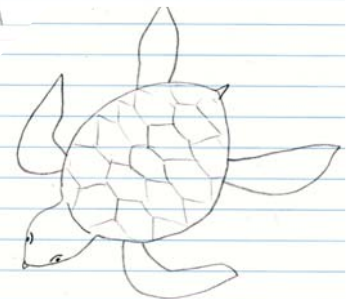
(Right) Silent auction



The Tiny Turtle.

Story by Alexandria Bennett - Originally from Issue 9

One day a turtle came to the beach to lay her eggs. On the first day in the nest it started to rain. On the second day it was very sunny. Then before you could say hellow, it had been a whole week, and ten baby sea turtles appeared out of the eggs. Rabbs and birds ate all the turtles except one tiny turtle. He escaped to the water and came back to start the cycle all over again.



Big Red Bus makes National Parks accessible to underserved Latino and Native American students.

Story by Benj Sinclair - Teton Science Schools

The Alexandria Foundation's beautiful new mobile classroom, nicknamed Big Red by the Teton Science Schools' where it lives, has had a busy year touring two national parks.

In Grand Teton National Park, just two miles to the bus's home ground at the Science Schools' Jackson Campus, Big Red has allowed dozens of local Latino families (photo below) to see and appreciate the wildlife and geological wonders of this Park during all seasons of the year. In collaboration with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, the Center for Wonder of Jackson and the Teton Literacy program, a team of Teton Schools' naturalists has been able to share their knowledge of the ecology and population dynamics of elk, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, mule deer and moose inhabiting this Park. This outreach program is geared toward a relatively new and important population of Teton County workers and residents who would otherwise avoid the Park for fear that any contact with National Park officers would result in their extradition.

From the perspective of Park officials, Big Red offers a unique opportunity to collaborate with the Alexandria Foundation and Teton Science Schools in



Latino's aboard Big Red / Photo by Benj Sinclair

Lessons.

When you are driving in your car, do you notice anything other than the traffic or lights you need to get through? How about when you are outside walking to the mailbox or into a store, do you see beyond the obvious? Because of Alexandria Craig and I were given the gift of sight. We no longer simply live blindly. We can be just about anywhere and find something incredible in our surrounding. Yes, sometimes we may have look harder than at other times, but the thing is if you take the time to look, you will enrich your life.

Another lesson Alexandria taught me is to really experience nature by touching. I have never liked touching worms, frogs or even butterflies. Alexandria never thought twice about picking up a worm and wanting me to hold it. I would simply tell her "not now" and then grimace when she walked away.

Boy have things changed, sort of. I still won't pick up a worm, but frogs/toads, caterpillars and butterflies I'm all hands on. When raising our butterflies this year, all 46, I had to spend an hour every two days moving each caterpillar from the dying plants to fresh ones. Each butterfly had to be carried outside to be set free. Alexandria would often show me how to hold the wings so you didn't hurt them. I even will catch and hold frogs and relish in knowing that Alexandria would be so proud of me. She may have to wait awhile to see me holding a worm.

planning their centennial anniversary programs for 2016 (photo of Jack Shea from TSS and Park officials)

Another culture that has long been denied free access to the national parks is Native Americans, and this past June, a contingent of 16 Shoshone and Bannock elders and students from the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho toured some sacred sites in Yellowstone National Park with the help of Big Red and a Teton Science Schools' naturalist. This was a watershed experience for these descendants of Yellowstone's original inhabitants, by allowing the native people of the region to reconnect with an ancient, sacred landscape that was their ancestral home for thousands of years (photo of Native Americans below).



Photo by Benj Sinclair



Native Americans on open ground in park / Photo by Benj Sinclair

This month, Big Red will carry a group of students, community leaders, conservation advocates, US Forest Service and Wyoming Department of Transportation officials to inspect a series of new wildlife crossings along a 40-mile stretch of highway that straddles on of the most important travel corridors for grizzly bears, elk and wolves in the lower 48 states, called Togwotee Pass.



Tree from resting on Leah's hand.



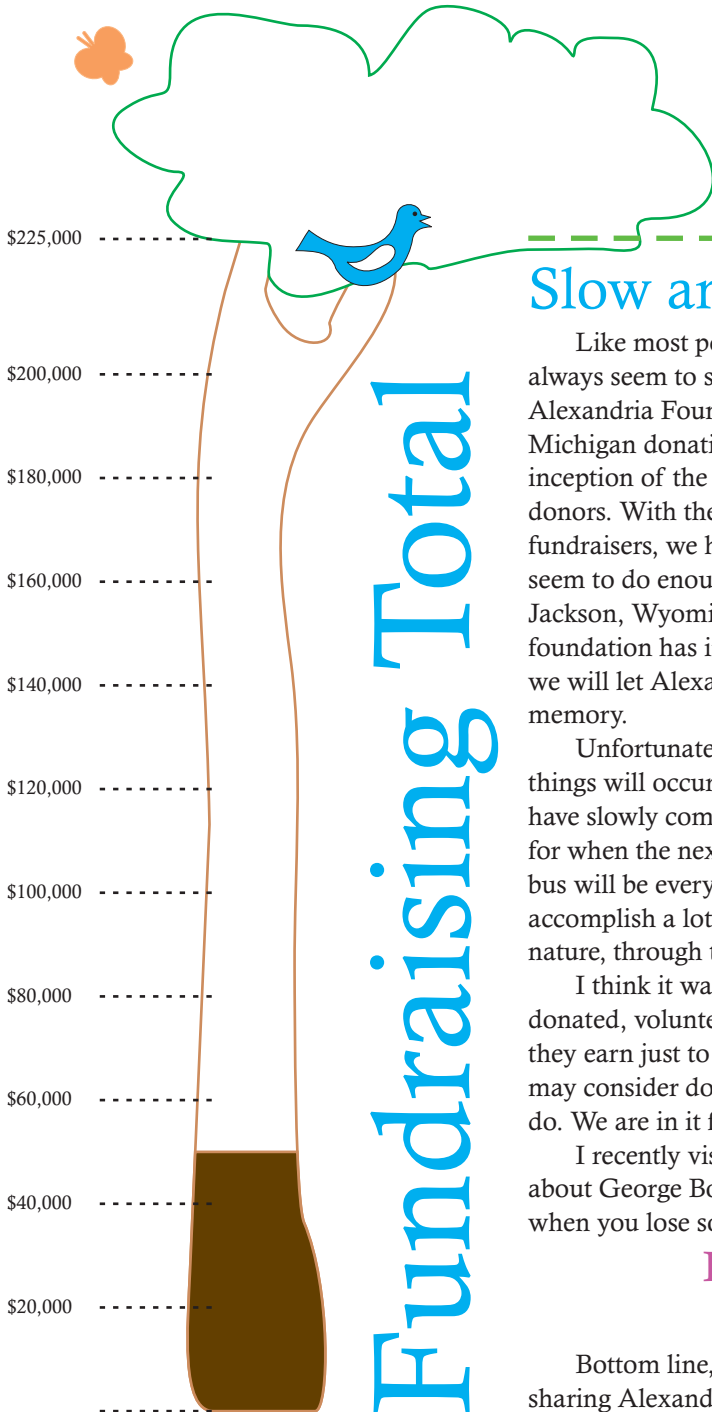
Alexandria holding a Monarch prior to releasing it.

/ Photos by Leah Bennett

Big and Little.

The foundation has six 1/4 scale butterfly chairs and 9 full size chairs available for purchase. Examples of the 1/4 scale butterflies are shown at the right. The full scale chairs are painted as Monarchs or Tiger Swallowtails. If you are interested please contact Leah Bennett at leah.bennett@spiritofalexandria.org.

The price for the small butterfly is \$100, \$1,500 for the large chair.



Slow and Steady.

Like most people that set goals, either personally or professionally, plans don't always seem to stay on course due to physical or monetary resources. The Spirit of Alexandria Foundation is no different. Due to the hurting economy, especially here in Michigan donations are at a low everywhere. We however cannot complain - since the inception of the foundation - just shy of 3 years, we have continually had generous donors. With the money that has been raised through personal donations and our fundraisers, we have accomplished a great deal in a short time. To Craig and I we can't seem to do enough. If we could send every student that applies for a scholarship to Jackson, Wyoming we would. The feeling we get from hearing the stories of how the foundation has impacted a person's life are very precious to us. Our greatest fear is that we will let Alexandria down, by not succeeding at what we have set out to do in her memory.

Unfortunately money dictates how much we can accomplish and at what speed things will occur. Craig and I battle daily with what we have not accomplished yet. We have slowly come to a realization that we may have to step back and redo our time line for when the next Mobile Classroom will be started and ultimately completed. The next bus will be everything we have said that it will be. In the mean time we can still accomplish a lot with the resources we currently have that will connect children to nature, through the scholarships, teacher programs and Cross Cultural Programs.

I think it was necessary for me to express these thoughts with everyone who has donated, volunteered or simply has shared our story. With people needing every penny they earn just to get by day to day, knowing that the money you may have donated or may consider donating in the future, is accomplishing everything we have promised to do. We are in it for the long hall - there is a little angel that we refuse to let down.

I recently visited the Cranbrook house and during the tour the person was telling us about George Booth (founder of Cranbrook schools) and one of his comments about when you lose someone and it hit home.

**If you want a person to live forever,
share them with others.**

Bottom line, every time we talk about the foundation or share it's message, we are sharing Alexandria and she will in deed live on through others.

Butterflies - Lost and Found.

Where are all the Monarchs? This was the question that Craig and I were asking ourselves part of the summer. We were starting our search for Monarch eggs and caterpillars and were coming up short. If you visit the Journey North website they show the general path that Monarchs take and they tend to V off around Michigan. We were beginning to think that chances of raising Monarchs was not going to be successful.

Good News! Craig hit the lottery when he visited a field in the industrial complex near the shop. This area often gets mowed through out the summer, being as Milkweed is a weed, it continues to grow back. From the mid July to mid August we would take morning walks down to this field. Our final total of eggs/caterpillars found in the various areas we searched was 48. Of the 48, I would say that 35 were found in this field that is mowed every few weeks. We think that without our finding and raising the eggs/caterpillars, that they would not have survived.

The number of butterflies successfully raised and released was 42; 1 Mourning Cloak (found on our front door), 6 Black Swallowtails (found on our Dill patch) and 35 Monarchs. It turned out that we needed to be patient and trust in our angel to guide us. I was lucky enough to get one picture with a Monarch sitting on our puppy Kip.

If you have a story about raising butterflies please send them in so that we can share them with our readers.



(Above) Eastern Black Swallowtail life cycle.

(Left) Day old Monarch caterpillar.

(Below) Kip posing with a Monarch. Monarch chrysalis moments from the butterfly emerging.



Excellent place for an adventure.

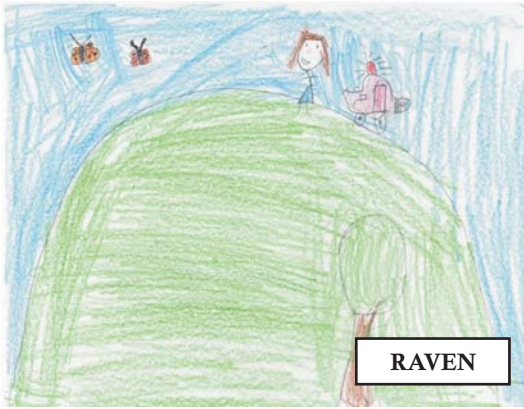
Story by Clare Kotesich, 2008 MSFEP Scholarship Winner

The Teton Science School is an excellent place for an adventure. You get to meet people from around the fifty states and even people from Mexico. This is an amazing experience because you get to learn so much by doing hands on activities and traveling to different places. You learn about the environment, the animals (especially birds) geography, and history. We got to learn these things by going on many hikes that would last 6 to 7 hours each day. You have to carry around a backpack with two 100mL water bottles (That's the only drink you get!) and your Hoo Ha. (yes that's what we called our lunches...) We would get up at either 7:00 or 7:30 eat breakfast, pack our lunches, then go out and not come back until 4:30pm. Our leaders who were awesome in their own way would lead us around trails and up gigantic hills which looked like mountains and wouldn't stop until everyone was on the ground panting. It may sound hard but it was one of the coolest things I ever got to do in my entire life. The views were amazing and you get to see so many animals up close. The reason they call Jackson Hole, Jackson Hole is because it is really just a big giant hole in the middle of Jackson. It is surrounded by mountains and looks like a valley from the top of the mountain we climbed. (Which took about 4 hours.. it was huge!) After you climb to the top of a mountain the first thing you say is 'Yes I made it!' but after a while you begin to feel the pain of climbing the mountain. Once you get used to walking around a lot (you lazy people like me) and used to the sea level there you feel good! You just feel like walking around everywhere and exploring because you know that you can walk for miles after climbing a mountain. It is THE coolest thing I have ever done in my life and I met the coolest people there who are now some of my best friends. Some of these friends of mine are; Kevin, Kyle, and Xavier from Maryland, Becca from Colorado, Carly from California, Alexander from Alabama, Blythe from New Mexico, Jack from Texas and Kyle (Crash) from Wyoming. We had the funniest times and many laughable memories. If I had the chance I would go back and do it all over again. This camp ROCKS!

Participants hiking / Photo by Clare Kotesich



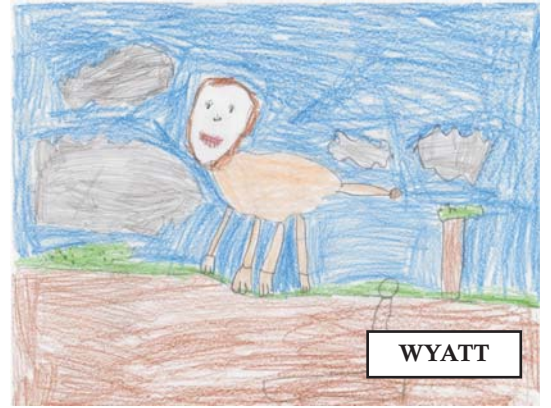
Thank you to the 1st grade students in Mrs. Roux's class at Blanche Sims Elementary, located in Lake Orion, Michigan, for their wonderful nature drawings.



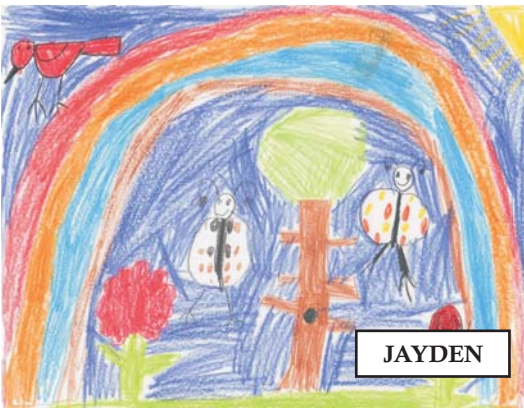
RAVEN



ASHLEY



WYATT



JAYDEN



RACHEL



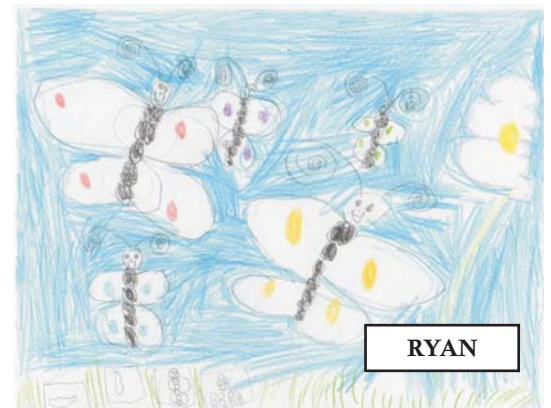
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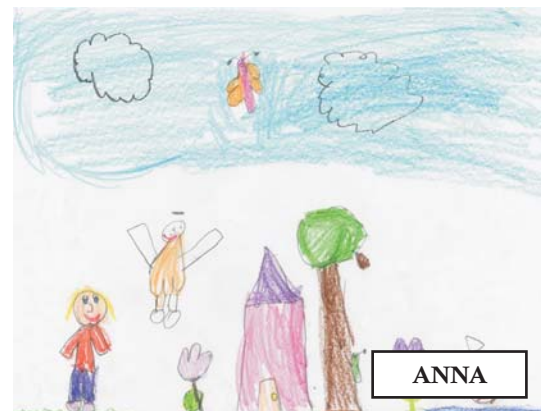
OLIVIA



RYAN



ALBERTO



ANNA

Nature drawings from Blanche Sims continued.



OLIVIA



CHRISTOPHER



NO NAME



MICHAEL



OLIVIA



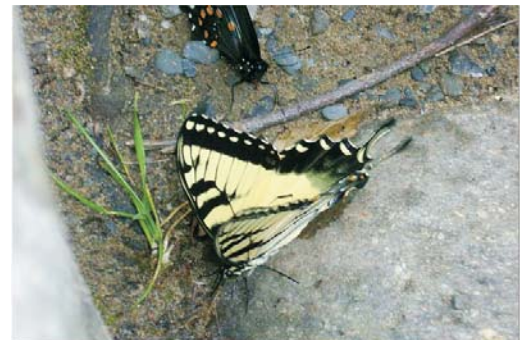
KATELYN



PETER

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.



Butterflies found while walking along trail in Gatlinburg / Photo by Erica Tobe



Tisha and her son found this 5 1/2 long Praying Mantis in their yard / Photo by Tisha Ortiz