



Sierra Watershed  
Education Partnerships

SWEP promotes environmental stewardship by connecting students to their community and local environment through comprehensive watershed education and service learning

## FALL 2008



### Winter Discovery Center Going up This Fall

Excellence in Education and Lahontan Foundation fund classroom

**Thanks** to funding from Excellence in Education, Lahontan Community Foundation and private fundraising, a 30' yurt will be constructed this fall at the Tahoe Cross Country Center. The new Winter Discovery Center will begin hosting students in January 2009 as a pilot program for 3-5th grades.

This collaborative effort will be implemented by Tahoe XC and SWEP, with support from partnerships with CA State Parks, Tahoe City PUD and volunteers.

The curriculum will primarily focus on winter ecology and winter fitness, with art, games and discovery 'hikes' as the core activities. Older students will conduct science experiments and learn monitoring protocol. All students will receive a journal to record their lessons and to use as reference for home and school.

This program will provide an opportunity for youth that does not already exist, and it will compliment the array of environmental education opportunities currently available in our region. We owe a huge thanks to Marisa Lopez, who took the volunteer initiative to write successful grants to fund our classroom!

Want more information?  
christine@4swep.org

**Volunteers** will be needed to assist with groups outdoors on skis and in the 'classroom'. A preliminary training will be held October 6 (see dates, pg.2). This two hour session will introduce you to tips for working with various age groups and how to guide students through the Jr. Naturalist program.

*Program development support is still being sought. Contact: Christine McMorrow 530-525-9457*



### Jr. Naturalist: A Success For All Seasons SWEP expands Jr. Botanist for Winter Program



When you learn something or someone's name, you begin to form a relationship. Once a relationship is formed, caring begins.

Books such as Last Child in the Woods, and a recent call by California state legislators to "Leave No Child Inside" highlight the concerns of many: that children are not spending time in the outdoors and this is affecting their health (childhood obesity rates are at about 30%) and well being. A 2002 study found that 25 percent of 8year olds could name more Pokemon characters than wildlife species (Sacramento Bee, Sept. 17,

2007). SWEP wants that statistic to be different for our region's youth.

The Jr. Naturalist program will expand the popular Jr. Botanist program to include wildlife and habitats. Students will have the opportunity to earn their jr. botanist and jr. biologist titles to become a jr. Naturalist.

Participants in our Winter Discovery Program (a pilot program for 2009) will work toward Jr. Naturalist status.

The program focuses on outdoor experiences which

expose students to the particular plants, animals and habitats near their study (school) site.

Currently, SWEP is working on putting study materials, a plant/animal list and testing criteria on our website.

As a service learning project, students in Maggie Bockius' 4th grade class are going to compile study materials for the Jr. Botanist plants. Look for that soon. In the mean time, stay posted to our website for more program information.



**Welcome  
Melissa 'Missy'  
Mohler**

SWEP would like to introduce Melissa 'Missy' Mohler as our new Project Director. Missy comes to SWEP with over 15 years of education experience in the Tahoe Truckee region. She has taught and administrated programs within the Charter system and the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District.

Missy grew up on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe where her love and interest for the environment was fostered. After studying abroad and at UC Berkeley, Missy returned to settle in Tahoe. Shortly there after she began a school program in which she taught environmental education and science classes. One of her goals with this program was to empower children to discover their ability to become stewards of the Lake Tahoe region and beyond.

Missy says that her "goal is always to empower students towards realizing their potential for making a difference in protecting and supporting Lake Tahoe's clarity and natural beauty". SWEP is excited to have Melissa 'Missy' Mohler as part of our team.

Welcome Missy!

Contact Missy:

missy@4swep.org

530-583-1430

Jan Ellis, SWEP project director for over 6 years, is moving on to teach at Incline Elem. Jan we will miss you, but promise to carry on with all of the great projects you have developed over the years. Thank you for your dedication and service to SWEP!!



## Dates to Remember

**September 18:** Cathy Berger Kaye Service Learning Workshop, San Joaquin Co. Office of Ed., Stockton

**October 6:** TTREC Partnership Celebration, UC Davis Historic Fish Hatchery, (Lake Forest/Hwy 28) Tahoe City

**October 11:** Environmental Literacy Summit; Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, Incline Village 9am-4:30pm

**October 19:** Truckee River Day

**October 23:** SWEP Annual Meeting location TBD

## Partnership Highlight: Kevin and Valli Murnane Tahoe Cross Country Ski Education Association

Valli and Kevin entered the ski industry in 1993 in the southern Sierra Nevada, where they operated Montecito Sequoia Cross Country Ski Resort. Along with operating the ski area, they offered guided interpretive hikes to adults and children during the fall, winter and spring seasons.

In 1999, the opportunity arose to move to Lake Tahoe and start Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area, a non-profit corporation with an emphasis on educational programs for children and adults. As the programs expanded at Tahoe Cross Country, they learned about an on-snow winter education program in Maine and felt that a Winter

Discovery Program of this kind would be of benefit to the Lake Tahoe community.

With the support of their board, Valli and Kevin contacted SWEP about the idea of creating a Winter Discovery program. Since that time and with the help of volunteers, we have been developing the idea, seeking funding and even hosted a few 'Winter Discovery' days during Ski/Skate week.

Kevin and Valli's enthusiasm, determination and commitment to the youth of our community truly make them great community partners! Thanks Kevin and Valli!

[www.tahoexc.org](http://www.tahoexc.org)

**Coming Soon!!**  
**Full Moon Gourmet Dining Experience**  
**In the Winter Discovery Center Yurt!**  
**January 12, 2009**  
**February 09, 2009**



## Environmental Literacy Summit: Sharing Assets Featuring Dr. Art Sussman!

October 11, 2008 9:00am-4:30pm

This summit will bring together teachers, educators, agency and organization staff, and interest community members to share assets in Applied Science, Service Learning & Environmental Literacy.

Features of the Summit:

- ❖ *Concurrent workshop sessions*
- ❖ *Free curriculum and resources*
- ❖ *Information on field trip and other funding*

Teachers will receive integrated curriculum resources, funding information, contacts with agency and organization partners for classroom and schoolyard visits as well as field trips, and service learning project ideas.

Learn about and develop student service learning projects, on the four topics

of: Forest health and defensible space; Wildlife; Invasive species on land and water; and Water quality.

Dr. Art Sussman, world famous science educator, will present his keynote "Dr. Art's Planet Earth Show," which combines scientific demonstrations with audience participation.

Dr. Art Sussman, the show's developer and performer, is a scientist who has playfully labored the past 25 years in developing innovative methods to teach environmental and scientific concepts in ways that are meaningful, effective and fun. He directs science and environmental education programs at WestEd, one of the nation's ten Regional Educational Laboratories.

Registration is available at [www.4swep.org](http://www.4swep.org)

The Watershed Tours and Environmental Literacy Summit are sponsored by the US Forest Service, Nevada Natural Resources Education Council, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Resource Conservation District, UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center, and SWEP. For more information call Joy Barney (USFS) 530-543-2685. Tickets and registration are available at [www.4swep.org/summit](http://www.4swep.org/summit)

### SWEP Staff:

**Christine McMorro**  
**Executive Director**  
 Phone/fax: 530-525-9457  
[christine@4swep.org](mailto:christine@4swep.org)

**Missy Mohler**  
**Project Director**  
 Phone: 530-583-1430  
[missy@4swep.org](mailto:missy@4swep.org)

**Eric McKee**  
**Watershed Education Assistant**  
**Americorps Member:**  
 Phone: 203-470-6411  
[eric@4swep.org](mailto:eric@4swep.org)

**Board Members:**  
 Toni Rockwell  
 Sue Rae Irelan  
 Heidi Bushway-Verkeler  
 Heather Segale  
 Monika Bock  
 Dan Allison  
 John Pang  
 Diane Malven-Pang  
 Tamara Anderson

Gratefully funded by: State of CA Prop.40 & 50; Nevada County Forest Reserve; Teichert Foundation; Town of Truckee; YCOE SL Initiative; TTCF