

June 27, 2008

Mr. Frank Svitek
Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation
Post Office Box 104
Ambler, PA 19002-0104

Dear Mr. Svitek:

We again extend our sincere thanks to you and to the board of the Kate Svitek Memorial Foundation. The 2008 trip has been completed, though course requirements and projects continue for students. Enclosed is a summary of the trip and a disc and thumb-drive with photos. This course has been one of the most impactful courses we have ever offered. Your support helps make it happen.


Our plan is to continue offering the course each year. As students experience the activities, they are becoming advocates for the environment and involving themselves in future initiatives. The legacy you are continuing in memory of your daughter is making a difference in developing responsible adults who have a desire to care for our world.

Thank you so very much.

Sincerely,



Dr. Phil McClung, Professor



Denise McClung, Professor

Psychology 397
Environmental Psychology
May 11-16, 2008

This was the second offering of this innovative, experimental learning course at West Virginia University Parkersburg (WVUP). Of the applications received, ten students were interviewed and selected by the team-taught faculty of Dr. Phil McClung, Professor of Psychology (and finalist Professor of the Year for WV for 2008 and for 2007) and Denise McClung, Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Division of Social Sciences. The course involved camping (May 11-16) throughout the beautiful state of West Virginia.

University and rental vehicles served as group transportation and tents became “home away from home.” Pre-trip meetings occurred where students met one another and course requirements and trip procedures were discussed and assigned. We met on Sunday, May 11, to begin our journey together.

Our first site visit was again at Kayford Mountain/mine with nationally and internationally renowned mountaintop top removal (MTR) advocate, Larry Gibson, a native resident and land owner of this mountain who also is a member of the West Virginia Highlands Conservatory. Mr. Gibson focused on the impact and devastation MTR has on our mountains and state. After fording a riverbed (due to downed utility lines, from a storm, blocking the road) to travel to the top of the mountain, we gathered on the porch of a camper for two hours listening to Mr. Gibson share his personally emotional view of the harmful devastation of MTR, while swirling winds and a tornado warning for the area encircled us on the mountain. Once the storm subsided, we witnessed the MTR process and outcomes from many angles. MTR is truly destroying our state and awareness is critical. This was an extremely powerful experience which

touched students to the core. Students are impressed and increased awareness occurs.

This is a great start to the trip each year (regardless of the weather conditions). We saw the New River Gorge and camped at a whitewater campground under shelters, attempting to help protect us from the torrential downpours that had continued throughout our first day. Several of the students pitched their first tents and constructed group living quarters while preparing dinner for the group under less than ideal conditions of rain and wind. They were quickly learning the importance of cooperation and the group dynamics were well on their way to developing a working team and caring group of people who were learning to watch over each other and our environment. Seeing this evolve in the group was rewarding. Each evening students were in charge of fixing pre-selected meals, cleaning-up, and evening activities. These activities included assigned topics concerning the next day's schedule that they had researched and prepared in order to inform the group of what would be experienced the following day.

On Monday, we visited Hawks Nest Dam with Dave Barnhart, representative with the power plant, and learned about the hydropower created by the river and dam process there. We then traveled to Cranberry Glades and toured the area learning about the bogs, plants and animals living in this unique environment. Again, the rains fell upon us as we continued to our next destination of Greenbank National Observatory. Students participated in educational modules and our guide showed us the telescopes and shared information about their role. Students are always surprised such a place exists in our state and enjoyed the experience here. From Greenbank, we went to Cass Railroad and then to the top of Snow Shoe. And yes, the rain continued this evening too.

Tuesday brought with it better weather! The sun began to shine and we were able to take-in the full gifts the Seneca Rocks area provides. We hiked to the top of Seneca Rocks which is a challenge to many students and a tremendous reward at the top. Confidence was being built and strengthened with each personal accomplishment. Interviews with local residents were arranged so students could ask questions and gather information about the local environment and the impacts on residents. We toured Seneca Caverns and learned about this part of the cave system existing in our state. Camping at the mouth of Seneca is a great treat because of the beautiful view of the rocks. The weather was wonderful too.

Our next day took us to the Dolly Sods area to walk and experience this unusual area. Students enjoy this walk and are again surprised by the different environment they are seeing in WV. We traveled through Canaan Valley to the wind farms on Backbone Mountain to see the massive structures lining the top of the mountain that are contributing to provide the power our nation expects. We walked to the falls and camped this night at Blackwater Falls State park as the rains poured again.

On Thursday, we left for the Coopers Rock area to participate in a high-ropes, Challenge Course developed by West Virginia University. This was an amazing experience for us all. The rain held off the entire time we were involved in the course work (and then rained that evening). The group was engaged in numerous team-oriented activities the whole day. Communication, cooperation, negotiation, mediation, team building, and self-confidence were major factors in this event. This was an activity Phil and I had researched and wanted to offer the students. We will continue to offer it each

year because of the wonderful dynamics, learning, and self-discovery that occurred. It was great.

This year's trip was impacted by the weather, but even this aspect brought learning to the group with increased problem-solving and cooperation. Students are still working on course requirements and projects (such as identifying trees in the WVUP walking/arboretum (on our campus) and placing bird feeders and houses, a calendar and documentary are in process, and an informational brochure on mountaintop removal is being developed just to name a few). This course has been highlighted in our campus admissions recruitment efforts, as well as serving as the topic of several public presentations in our service area. We know the course has made and is making a difference with not only the students involved, but our campus and community. As one outcome, we hope to start a campus-wide recycling program this fall that Phil and I led and initiated. Phil and I have met with community leaders (Mayor, Chamber of Commerce, Solid Waste, City Planner, etc) to bring recycling into focus. It's beginning.

Thank you Mr. & Mrs. Svitek and the Svitek Foundation for your continued support to help educate and offer students this outdoors learning experience. Phil and I are committed to the purpose of this effort and to make a difference in the future of our world. Students are making a difference. Thank you again.

**enclosed is a disc and thumb-drive with trip photos.