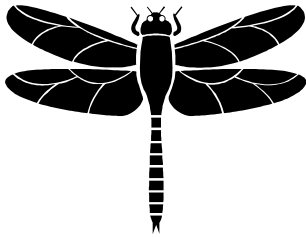
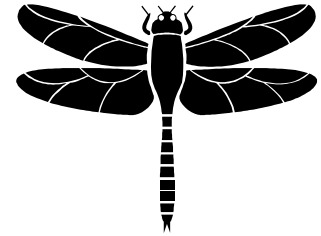

Alumni Reflections



GES



Collected in 2009
Unedited

Thinking back to the greatest days of my life...the GES ones of course. I would have to say that my greatest memory would have to have been the rain walks we went on. Remembering back to the moist mornings where we would dawn our rain gear and head out to walk through the wondrous and vast Seidman Park. The fog would be settled on the ground obscuring out view of the earth floor. It was almost as if it was a dream. The lichen would be a lushous green. The pine you could smell all around. The birds were quiet as the rain fell, but they lay in wait for the rain to stop. The forest seemed to be trapped in time when it rained, all life would stop and it would seem as if you could hear the forest breathe. This is a memory I will never forget and there are many more like this. I long for the day when I will experiance this again.

-Nick - aka. Sparty

We were restless, sitting on shore of Lake Michigan in twilight on the last night of Spring Camp and subsequently the last night of GES. We were supposed to be recording our last bittersweet ruminations in our journals; instead a few of us had begun communicating with one another via rocks so the adults would not catch onto our liaisons. "I'll miss you;" one girl spelled out, using a variety of stones and pebbles, and resourcefully using a twig in lieu of an apostrophe. I attempted to shape a heart with the small collection of smooth Petoskey stones I had in reach, but created only a shapeless blob. We hadn't showered in days, reveling in what seemed like our last complete immersion into childhood. After we traveled home, we'd have to fully assume our role as adolescents, rushing towards things like lockers and science learned out of a textbook.

As soon as we got called back to the minivans that would drive us back to base camp, we resisted, insisting on taking more pictures, of staying until sunset. Six girls piled into the back of the van as the

boys sat in the rows up font, gender segregation still a hallmark of prepubescent kids. We sat in silence, until slowly Keefer began crying; just a few dignified adult tears, until child-like, unselfconscious sobs began to rack her body. We followed in succession, each of eventually surrendering to the knowledge that middle school was upon us and the bond we had developed seemed to have an expiration date. We clung to each other, wiping our faces on each others sleeves, and rubbing our eyes. The mini-melodrama was interrupted when the boys turned around in their seats and violently sprayed us with AXE body spray, cackling and coughing triumphantly. The offending scent burned our throats, but we started laughing, united by the fact that boys still, as a general rule suck. We were upset, scared that the lives we had grown comfortable with, the people whose lives we had fused with, were going to be severed by middle school and moving on. Recently, after a high school basketball game, I walked out into the parking lot with three other girls who have been my confidantes for eight years, three of the girls who had cried on my shoulder in that van. We clung to each other for warmth before Laurel causally mentioned that it was like Goodwillie all over again. I am in AP Environmental Science and to be honest the only feeling it inspires in me toward the environment is a hostile desire to club baby seals and strangle bottle-nose dolphins with nets. I may not retain the deep abiding respect I had for nature back in the 5th and 6th grade, by I am eternally grateful that G and E taught me not just to look, but to observe and I am grateful for the confidence they instilled in me, but I'll be eternally grateful for the friends whose shoulders I've cried on for almost a decade.

-Cassie

When I am asked to recall what I enjoyed most about my experience at Goodwillie, my brain scans a million wonderful memories and it's almost impossible to choose just one. How can any memory top frogging knee deep in the cold, night waters of G's pond, or that incredible performance of *A Christmas Carol*? But one of my fondest recollections is not of a single event; it's of something that occurred almost daily in the field in front of school during recess. Community Building.

During my 5th grade year at Goodwillie, we came up with the idea to begin building huts in the field. Crude as they were, these strongholds of sticks, grass, and rocks offered us the opportunity to work as groups of friends to organize the construction of a structure, and to try our hand at entrepreneurship. Each of the seven or eight huts had a specialty service or craft to offer the community and we bartered with our neighbors for items we needed. The six friends in my hut offered pet rocks and accessories, which we would trade for grass or sticks that we might need on a daily basis. Not much of earthly value to an outsider, but in our world, absolute necessities. Little did we know at the time that we were learning so much more...about leadership, compromise, self-reliance, and keeping peace with your neighbors. As fall turned to winter our huts were covered with snow. Now, the lessons of business turned to lessons of survival as the primary focus was to keep warm. While the six of us huddled together for warmth in our hut and chatted endlessly about everything from the day's events to our deepest desires, we learned how to share ourselves with those who meant the most to us.

I am a junior at Forest Hills Central now, knee deep in the process of choosing a college. While I am not planning on a career in outdoor sciences or even business, the lessons I learned in that field are with me everyday as I work on group projects and organize my complicated life into a plan for the future. My days at Goodwillie taught me that anything is possible, especially with the help of good friends....
-Julia

Phenology. It's the subject that no other school does. You get closer to mother nature every time you study this subject. There is not one answer but endless answers. There is no textbook, no tests, only you, your notebook, and the sensational world around you. I still remember it today. We would walk in to school and hear booming sound of G yelling "Lets go! Get your phenology stuff! Hurry up!" We would hustle to grab our stuff, line up, and be on our way to the great outdoors. And after a silent walk through the lively woods full of sounds, sights, and smells, we scatter off to a spot to write. And we would write:

Today's Temp: 26 degrees

Weather: light snow, no wind. Stratus clouds.

Observations: I spot a red-bellied woodpecker working to find food.

You would write about what you hear and see. Until G howls "Who cooks for you! Who cooks for you!" and you run back and walk back to our "shelter".

After doing phenology at Goodwillie, I wanted to try and capture the environment around me through my camera. Goodwillie (more specifically phenology) has made me what I am today; a kid that wants to capture the surroundings around him and share with future generations. Thank you Goodwillie.
Connor

The Good Old Days

During my fifth and six years in school I attended the Goodwillie Environmental School. This school was not any ordinary school, we were taught the same curriculum as the mainstream students but with a major twist. Everything was based around nature. We were trained to use every tool in our senses to absorb the living environment around us. Years later I sit and look back upon those two magnificent years at Goodwillie and smile.

The thing that amazes me most about Goodwillie is that I remember almost everything I learned there Birds, trees, wildflowers, and other western Michigan inhabitants. How is it that I can remember things from over ten years ago better than I can the math and history that I learned last year? It is because of the way we were taught. The teachers at Goodwillie love what they do and it shows. I was completely immersed in nature for two years of my schooling and I will never forget what I learned there.

A specific memory of mine that truly towers above the rest is the end of the year hiking trip. I remember the last night on the trip. Our camp was at the edge of lake Michigan in the shadow of an enormous dune. We had a good fire going and while the sun was setting we all began to tear up and reminisce about our fun times at Goodwillie. I was scared to go to middle school, I did not want to leave my northern friends, and I was afraid that I would hate the ridged ways of mainstream schooling. I made it out of middle school and high school and now onto college. Not a day goes by that I wish I could just go back for a week or so and be at Goodwillie as a student once again.
-Elliott

It has been five years since the first day I attended Goodwillie, and I can still vividly picture that walk, hand in hand, through the muddy woods of Siedman Park. That walk paved the way for two years of incredible memories. From fall camp in fifth grade to spring camp in sixth grade, those two events, remarkable in themselves, encompass two years I will certainly never forget. There are the obviously prominent memories: attempting to sing and act in "Sounds of the Forest" and "A Christmas Carol"; building an actual log cabin with Grandpa Stegmier; creating various Native American structures and tools with Kevin Finney; discovering our artistic talents with Woody; and the lasting impacts of the extraordinary teachers. But just as much as walking through ponds blindfolded, or any of the crazy things done only at Goodwillie, I find myself recalling memories of the smaller things. I remember the days of phenology, magic spots, forts, lunch boxes in trees, capture the flag, and most of all, appreciating our beautiful natural world. I gained so much from the two years I spent at Goodwillie and the countless memories will stay with me forever.

-Nicki

The Environmental School had a profound influence on my life. I have always had an interest in the outdoors, but it wasn't until I went here that I was able to see that nature and the environment had so much to offer to me in the way of education. I learned to identify the trees, the birds, the flowers, but I also learned to appreciate that nature provides us with so many goods and services that are literally priceless. On a deeper and more personal level, I learned that by being in and among nature I can find an inner peace. I remember sitting and just listening to the world around me in a little three-tree crevasse on a hill that I still call my Magic Spot (I went to find it just last summer and it was just as I had left it!) There is something fascinating about nature that even left brilliant men like Thoreau and Emerson speechless. I am currently studying Biology and eventually Education at Allegheny College, in Meadville, PA. I wish to someday teach in a setting like that of GES and do everything I can to keep nature alive in the eyes of the most impressionable.

-Rhianna

My Least Fond Memory

I hate chickens. Almost every time my mother offers me chicken for dinner, just a whisper of a smug smile dances across my face—a bitter reminder of the horrors they caused me. It is because of chickens that I am not a vegetarian.

After being the first CEO of Goodwillie Environmental School's "Clucks 4 Bucks" egg production business, I have lost just about all sympathy I once had for those dreadful farm animals. Don't get me wrong—I loved the behind-the-scenes work. The writing of my pristine little weekly newsletters, the constantly skipped recesses spent in unproductive board meetings, the sense of humble authority (something that was essentially pulled like a rug from under me when I entered middle school)—they were all things that I loved about my role in our ultimately successful school business.

However, once in a while, a fellow student would barge in after the exceedingly unsanitary job of feeding the beastly creatures—either grimacing or grinning, I could never decide. Stomping their feces- and sawdust-encrusted boots in our unsuspecting classroom, they would announce proudly, "ANOTHER CHICKEN IS DEAD!" Then would commence the *real* dirty work.

-Eleanor

It's been almost five years since leaving Goodwillie, and I can still see its lasting effects on me. Each day was full of new things- you were literally always in for a surprise. I loved being able to get up in the morning and not know what to expect of the day. Goodwillie influenced me in numerous ways, in all sorts of areas. This school was especially crucial in the growth of my writing. Visiting magic spots- pouring out my life into a journal- helped my writing develop immensely. To someone taking a walk in the woods, my magic spot may have seemed like just a fallen, dead log. But to me, this spot meant much more. It was a place where I could feel like I was one with nature. It was a place where I could relax. It was a place where I could let out my feelings on paper. It's amazing to see what a little quiet time in nature, a notepad, and a pen can do for a person. I know that visiting magic spots greatly influenced my writing, and it is something that I will never forget.

-Andrea Byl

Among the many fifth grade memories for which I feel nostalgic, I find my grown-up self most eagerly thirsting for my old Magic Spot. Great fortunes would I now pay to have such a private, quiet, idyll, and verdant location all to myself for my studies at Kalamazoo College. When stressed, I repeatedly find myself longing for my private Oak, secluded amidst the twittering birds; a place so far embedded into the raw natural aspect of the world that I can effectively abandon the demanding din of society. In my Spot, I felt my writing was not so much the product of myself, my culture, or my historical context, but was rather the culmination of millions of years of wind, sun, rain, dirt, night, migration, germination, evolution, and photosynthesis. Leaning against the rough bark of that ancient tree, I was a small yet valuable piece of a circular and sensitive world. The true "Magic" of the spot lies not in its location, but rather in its ability to allow one to "forsake all inhibitions, [and] pursue thy dreams"(Walt Whitman).
-Brandon

Elementary school was dull, middle school was a drag, and high school was sustainable, but Goodwillie Environment School was different. It was amazing. The anxious feeling to go to school; the long walks through the forest to our phenology spots; the famous games of capture the flag; the fear of G catching me on my birthday; and the spring camping trips, these are all the precious memories I have made throughout my days at GES. I still remember the day G took us frogging in the swamps of Camp O'Mally. It was a warm Fall day and while all the other cupcakes were inside their large brick buildings looking at slide shows of swaps, I was wading through one with forty four other classmates hunting for spring peepers and bull frogs. Frogging, hiking, fort building, and camping, it is experiences and opportunities such as these that make my days at GES unique and unforgettable. In this small atmosphere, GES offered me the different academic challenges and personal growth that shaped me to who I am today.
-Christopher

It seems that whenever I'm with friends of mine, somehow our conversation always drifts back to "the good 'ole" days when we were at Goodwillie. I think the greatest part about it was that I didn't realize how much it affected my life until years later. All the special moments, whether it was the first day of school, being blindfolded and walked through the woods to our new building, or those couple days where we had an alligator (what?!?). At the time, everything seemed normal and everyday, but now that I reflect on the greatest two years of my life, it's revealed how special they were.

I've always been someone who loved to go outside, but I didn't realize that I wanted to spend the rest of my life outside until after GES. I'm now enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, working towards my degree in Wildlife Ecology and plan to attend law school. Through my two years at GES, I realized that I want all future generations to have the same opportunities I had. Through becoming a lawyer, my goal is to protect as many resources as I can so that my children and my children's children can experience the same magical moments I had while being outside.
-Kevin

Though people often throw around the phrase "it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," when I use it in regards to my two years spent at Goodwillie, I mean it in all sincerity. Though I may not always remember the math lessons I studied or the poems I wrote, my experiences at GES I will always remember as they affect my past, present, and future.

One of my favorite memories from Goodwillie is our year-end camping trip. I can still remember walking along the beach with the waves gently lapping at our feet while we carried our hiking backpacks. I can remember working together to set up our tents and hearing the familiar Bard Owl Hoot "who cooks for who" during the first night. I can remember the bike trip with our pit stops for lunch and Dairy Queen. The camping trip had such a lasting impact on me that this past summer, as my family was driving to Leelanau, I revisited the memories as we drove through that area. I relived the adventures we went on. I remember the family I spent those two amazing years of my life with.

Even now, as a junior in high school, my GES experience influences the decisions I make. The love I learned to feel for nature and animals fuels my college search as I dream of becoming a veterinarian. To call my two years at Goodwillie Environmental School just a part of my schooling would be doing an injustice, for they provided more than education; they contained memory and friendship forming events that, together, formed a once-in-a-lifetime experience.
-Kailene Schabes - A.k.a. Deer Mouse

When I think back to my time at GES, my thoughts are primarily filled with games of capture the flag, hikes to clandestine magic spots, and studying - whether in our eco-friendly classroom, or our great outdoor textbook. Nature took a whole different form each day that passed at GES. This came from observations during phenology, and all the projects that we came to understand with our minds and with our hands. My time at GES taught me to observe the minute details, and examine the greater effects they hold. I learned that a textbook has information, but experience is where true learning comes from, and progress is made by working together whether it be a group of bees constructing a hive or a group of students constructing a wig-wam. The two years I spent at GES incited an interest in science and nature that has yet to wear off. Going into college next year I hope to study evolutionary biology and satiate my curiosity in the changes of nature, that began the day I trundled off the bus for my first day of 5th grade at GES.

-Z

To think that my GES experience ended nearly seven years ago seems unreal. It seems like just yesterday I was sitting under a tree writing in my phenology journal comparing the colors of the leaves to lemon bars, or a fire in the sky. So many great things happened during my tenure at GES but one memory sticks out far greater than any other, the last back packing trip.

Walking the dunes along Lake Michigan, waking up at 6:30 in the morning, freezing, just to start playing cards with my tent-mates, and finding a piece of drift wood that would bring the experience to an end. That last night at GES is something I'll never forget. We all sat around the fire in the beginnings of the Indian village, and one by one told each something special that came from that school and threw the piece of wood into the fire. It was unbelievable how a bunch of teenagers could be so emotional over a school. But then again how couldn't we have been? GES played such a crucial role in our lives and clearly we wouldn't be the people we are today if we hadn't gone there.

Since that last night I've moved to Union, New

Jersey. I'm a freshman attending New Jersey City University, where I am studying Music Education with a concentration in percussion, and one day hope to teach music at either the high school or middle school level. The amazing staff at GES inspired me to become a teacher. And one day I hope to inspire children the way G, E, and B inspired me. Without GES and can't even begin to imagine what I would be or what I'd be doing, I'm truly thankful to have had that experience.

-David

How long ago it seems that I was at the Goodwillie Environmental School (or the Forest Hills Environmental School, as it was called for my first year). I recall the excitement of receiving the acceptance letter, the anxiety and enthusiasm of the first day. Walking down the driveway in the rain and mud on the first day, the anxiety faded almost immediately; from the "pipe-cleaner observation test," developing phenology skills, semi-spontaneous capture the flag games, beginning to learn to identify birds and trees, and trail guiding younger students and other community members, the enthusiasm grew even faster than the anxiety had, and to a level which the anxiety never even approached.

In addition to providing me with lasting friendships, the days at Camp O'Malley and Siedman Park have laid a foundation for my further studies, deepening my innate appreciation of natural environments. In my first semester of college at the University of Michigan, a class entitled "Environment, Religion, Spirituality, and Sustainability" (which is even broader in actuality than the title suggests), has brought to my attention the broad range of causes of problems - for example, the "wealth gap" - and contributors to solutions - for example, religious leaders - which are not obvious in initial considerations of environmental issues. In response to all of these experiences, I will be pursuing a major in the environmental sciences and/or environmental politics.

-Mark

We sure had some memorable experiences back in our good old days at GES. My memories from the camping trips, fort building, capture the flag, and broomball were definitely some of the most exciting highlights from my adolescent years. Now while I fully appreciate the fact that I was given the opportunity to do these fun activities at school, there were more important things from my GES experience that have made a lasting impression on my life. It was my finding of an appreciation for nature that sets my Goodwillie experience apart from what I could have gotten at any other school.

What I gained from GES was the impulse to take off my shoes and feel the soft moist moss under my toes, the ability to truly open my senses and let my eyes, ears, and nose take in the full beauty that a forest has to offer. And most of all the fact that no matter what life throws at me, I can always find a magic spot in the woods where my worries, stresses, and life's complications cannot find me.

-Thomas

My favorite experience at Goodwillie was during my 5th grade year when the class went frogging. The night we had was perfect. It had been warm enough so that the water was tolerable, and the air didn't nip at your wet skin after getting out. My family and I were on a mission to not only catch frogs, but more specifically the Spring Peeper. We hear them every spring in our backyard, and I was determined to show my dad what a small frog it was. When I finally did get that Peeper, I was wading through the water as quickly as possible to show them. As I was dragging my feet along the bottom of the pond, I snagged on a tree limb hidden from sight. My lack of coordination sent me falling backwards into the water, but I refused to throw out my hand to break the fall and drop the frog. So, the frog and I went down together into the water. When I managed to get my feet back under me I brought the Spring Peeper still safe in my grasp to show my family. That experience was my most traumatic and memorable at Goodwillie Environmental School.

-Melissa

It was dark and the only light we had to go by was the light of the full moon and the glittering stars. We walked single file through the woods, all 53 fifth graders, following the mountain of a man, Mr. G of course, looming ahead of us. Occasionally, his deep rumbling voice would fill the still air telling us to keep close. Through the trees we could see the moon reflecting off the water. Soon we were on the lake shore peering off over its vast surface, our eyes straining for any glimpse of movement. Then we saw it, a flash of firelight on the opposite shore, quickly extinguished. Then again on the opposite shore another flash of firelight, again quickly extinguished. Then in the middle of the lake a man in a birch bark canoe held aloft a torch and let out such a scream it made me get goose bumps. I had just seen the ghost of Injun Joe. Almost a decade has passed since that night at spring camp and I will never forget that experience. Just like so many other unique experiences that GES has given me over the years.

-Keith

A young girl looks out the bus window and swallows nervously. It is her first day of fifth grade. Anticipation flutters in her chest, but so do butterflies. With one deep breath, she descends the bus stairs, stepping onto the dry gravel park parking lot.

A man of great girth is herding the children into a line. "Not a word," he warns them. His threat of expulsion hangs in the air. The girl's eyes widen, and her lips are pressed together so tightly that not even the jaws of life could pry them apart.

The bright sun filters through the verdant canopy as the line of children walks through the woods. The crisp, dewy morning air would take the girl's breath away if she weren't holding it in for fear of making a solitary sound.

The children have been walking for what seems like a long time. The girl's legs are tired; yet, her heart is beating solidly in her chest. The path is now laid with woodchips, and as the line approaches the end of the path, a green and beige building comes into view.

The girl knows something important is happening—but she doesn't know the scale of it. She doesn't know how this school will change her, in both expected and unconventional ways. She doesn't know that she'll make best friends and that she'll make lasting memories. She doesn't know that she will meet teachers she will never forget. She doesn't know how her love of reading and writing and sketching will flourish under their guidance. She doesn't know that she'll learn to play Broomball on ice and Capture the Flag in three feet of snow. She

doesn't know that she'll sing in musicals, about Michigan's history and about Ebenezer Scrooge. She doesn't know that she'll go birding and frogging and camping and tree-identifying. She doesn't know that she'll help build forts and a log cabin and a Native American mudhouse. She doesn't know how she'll fall in love with the Joyful Noise of poetry or how head-over-heels she'll be for a magic twisted tree and the Living Textbook in which it grows. She doesn't know how she'll come to wear zip-off pants and cross-country skis and the proud title of Treehugger. She doesn't know any of that...but what she does know is this: the next two years of her life are going to be one heck of an adventure.

-B. Joanna Chen

Winter at Goodwillie was so unlike any other winter anywhere else. It was so much better! Where else can the teachers just decide that we're going to go sledding instead of classroom time? Or, that maybe instead of Math, let's go cross country skiing? No where, that's where! Goodwillie truly is a one-of-a-kind place, but winter was my favorite part. Sure the lunch outside in the winter was a little tricky to do without freezing your hand, but you barely even noticed once they went numb. However, ice skating and broomball were two things that people I still know from Goodwillie wish we could do instead of English. And who wouldn't? Looking back at it, Goodwillie has changed my life in so many ways, all of them for the better. It's great to stumble upon old friends that you haven't seen since the last day, and just as great to see the people that you've remained best friends with through that whole time. Of all the decisions that I've ever made, the one to apply to Goodwillie was by far my best decision, and I still think of those two years as the best two years of school ever.

-Angela

The brown oak leaves crackled underneath my hiking boots as my eleven year old self ran inside from morning recess. I'd been attending Goodwillie Environmental School for about a month and I loved it. Mr. Gillette, my big loud science teacher, announced we were going to take an Incredible Journey. All 48 of us pulled on our fleece jackets and

tugged our wool hats over our ears. We were getting used to the spontaneity of this new school, whether Mr. Gillette spotted a cedar waxwing during math class and ordered us to gather around the window or when Mrs. Eckstrom brought us outside to tell us that our new class project was to build a cookhouse just as the Native Americans did. As we were getting our warm clothes on, we discussed what this "Incredible Journey" would consist of. Would it be a journey off the trails of Seidman Park? Or would we decide where we wanted to explore? Our fantasies were endless; after all we were at a school where anything could happen.

We followed Mr. Gillette outside excited about this new adventure into the organic world. Each of us stood in a line waiting as Grandmamma handed out long pieces of cloth.

"The next step of this incredible journey is for each of you to tie this cloth around your eyes" boomed Mr. Gillette. "Be sure that you can't see anything, and remember to listen, use all of your senses."

Soon the world went black and we waited in silence, holding tight to the rope that connected us.

Our Incredible Journey began as we shuffled our feet across the hard ground. Each step took us farther and farther away from the familiar and closer and closer to the abstract. A calm silence overcame us. All we could hear was the crunching of old dried up leaves under our hiking boots. Every so often Mrs. Eckstrom would grab my hand, "there's a log, so slowly step over it." or Grandmamma's soft hands would gently lower our heads, "there's a branch." The only constant was the twitter of a chickadee or the cracking of branches as we continued our journey. Has the air always had that moist taste of morning dew? And the smells, oh, the smells. I didn't remember smelling the tree's old bark and the green grasses poking up from the dirt running in from morning recess but they came alive now. Today, seven years later, I can still vividly remember that day; that day I started my own incredible journey.

Goodwillie Environmental School taught me to love the environment, it taught me how to open my eyes and appreciate the natural world. Wonder was the first step for me. Mr. Gillette and Mrs. Eckstrom first showed me how to appreciate the world around me. Now it is my turn to learn about life sciences so I can pass it on to other students. Because of their dedication to my learning, I want to pass it on. I want to spread the wonder. And I want to learn how.

-Meagan

Trying to think of the ultimate GES experience I realize how precious those years were. Our curious minds were completely encouraged by our teachers. That alone was something so special, only now when I look back does it resonate as a path less traveled. I think what made each day unique was Phenology: the first thing we did every day. We would troop out to a site somewhere on the property and observe our world. We recorded everything we sensed from the ever so often buzz of a plane to the extreme detail of an oak leaf. Everyone had their own way of describing the world around them, some used poetry, others had lists; the point was that we were all experiencing nature to the fullest. It was a time when we could afford to do that. I think about all those kids who get to do that tomorrow morning and am quite jealous. Though I haven't recorded my surroundings for years now, I give those mornings credit for the "powers of observation" I have now. To be able to look objectively, or notice detail is a gift that GES gave me and I am grateful for that.

-Hannah

Well, I'd have to say that my favorite and most prominent reflection – or at least ONE of them – was in sixth grade when Ms. Keller and Mr. Moorehead decided that it was just TOO nice outside and we all got to spend the rest of the day out on Kill Hill sledding. They kept on shouting warnings and such at us, like, "Don't break your arm!" "Don't get yourself killed!" and "Dying means a lot of unnecessary paperwork for us, so please avoid that at all costs." You get the idea, I'm sure, if you know them. Sledding all day instead of doing schoolwork. Hm. Now, doesn't that sound like a LOT of FUN??

Another was also in sixth grade. Apples to Apples ruled the free time we had at sixth grade spring camp. Two party sets mixed together with some fifty-odd kids at one time or another, give or take a dozen, and you get some real good belly-busters right there. (Warts = Glamorous? Umm, can we rethink that? Oh wait, hold on, I can't breathe here....) Apples to Apples put together with a whole lot of rambunctious sixth graders. Ho yeah. That's one for sure option if you want to die laughing. In a good way, of course.

And yet another: just anytime in the warmer weather laying back on a sun-warmed hill with the golden grasses swaying around me while I read, and time lost its meaning entirely to me, because I was in a whole 'nother world.

And of course, hearing my favorite teacher bellowing for us to get our butts back inside. That's a definite fave.

As well as the precarious at worst and downright hazardous at best (opinions may vary) sledding hill. Now THAT was a ride worth waiting in line for. Chelsea

As a student at Goodwillie I have had so many amazing memories, to many to name. I think that the best memory, the one that will stay with me my whole life is the teachers and how they impacted me. Each of the teachers impacted me in a different way and to them I am thankful.

On the first day of school I had no idea of what to think of Mr. G, he was loud and nothing like any of the other teachers I had ever had. Soon I realized that he was just a softy, he would put his hand on your head if you felt sick and if you were sad he would make your day better. Mr. G influenced me to become more involved in my birdwatching, I had been birdwatching from a very small age and his praise helped me to become more devoted. Mr. G's praise of my knowledge gave me the self confidence I needed to continue birdwatching.

Mrs. E taught me to do my best all the time. Other people in the past would accept my average work and would not force me to my best. Mrs. E forced me to always work to my personal best. She did not accept average work. Mrs. E's high standards are lessons that I have kept through this day. Mrs. E also taught me to believe in myself, she has given me confidence that will last for the rest of my life.

Mr. Moorehead I still think of today as a fun loving leprechaun. While in seventh grade I had problems adjusting to my new math teacher, she was drastically different from Mr. Moorehead. One day in class my friends and I decided that we needed Mr. Moorehead to come to our school and teach math, because he was unable to actually come to the school we decided to draw him. Each day we would add something new to the picture and having just a picture of him there was that little assurance that we could survive math class.

I will always remember French Fridays with Ms. Keller. I had so much fun learning the new language. Without Ms. Keller and her French I probably would not be learning the language today. I also loved sharing books with Ms. Keller. Whenever I was out of a book in need of something to read I would turn to her and I would read an amazing book. She also started me on my favorite series "Chronicles of Ancient Darkness." Ms. Keller opened a whole new area of books for me to read and I'm thankful for our shared passion.

I can't talk about all the teachers and neglect to talk about Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Elliot. I loved walking into the office and always see a smile on their faces, something I have missed in the past years. They both knew how to put a smile on my face and make me feel amazing.



Knowing everyone at Goodwillie has changed my life for the better. I have no idea what would have happened if I had not had the opportunity to have them as my teachers.

- Emily

A favorite memory of mine from going there would have to be the last night at Spring camp in 6th grade. After a long day of hiking, we all got some time to relax and enjoy each other's company. Some kids decided to explore, but a small group of about ten kids and I decided to just sit and reflect about our experience at FHES. I can't remember everyone that was there talking with us but I know that Emily Mowers, Brooke Van Dyke, Ben Owen and some others were there (I sure am getting old ;)). The sun started to go down as we were talking. None of us could wrap our minds around that fact that that was the end of our journey as one big family. We were all being split up to two different "regular" schools. I can remember so well how we would talk about how weird it would be to it in a classroom of all places to learn. We didn't want that day to end, but we knew it would and we would all go on with our lives. As the sun sank into the lake, we all hugged each other and cried together and promised to stay in contact as we continued on through school and our lives. And to this day, I have kept in touch with most of my classmates. That night was the ending of a phenomenal time of my life. I am so proud of you guys for helping us to make these memories!! Thank you doesn't begin to express my appreciation for all you guys do for your students.

-Heather

My time at the Environmental School is still the favorite part of my educational career. I had so many amazing times, and the community we were able to foster there became a true family. But my favorite part of the Environmental school was my magic spot. Most FHES or GES alumni know exactly what I'm talking about. That one place in the woods that was only ours. I got so excited when G and E would tell us to grab our journals and head outside; it was the best part of my week. All the students would chat and laugh as we walked to the woods, but once we reached the path, we would walk in silence, taking in the beauty of our surroundings. Perhaps the leaves had just turned, and the forest looked like it was on fire. Or the first snow had fallen the night before, and everything was covered

in white, and all out magic spots looked like places out of a fairy tale. My spot was on a stump in the wetlands, and when I sat down, I was completely surrounded by cattails and tall grass. As I sat there, the rest of the world disappeared, and I could just be. I listened to the singing birds, the trees rustling in the wind, and the other sounds of the forest one never hears unless he or she takes time to listen. And I would just write. Write about what I was thinking and feeling and about all the new things I discovered in my magic spot. It seemed the spot changed each time I visited it. I loved to be in my magic spot, observing the natural world, and feeling so small under the big blue sky above me. I always hated when G would whistle, and I would have to gather my things together and slowly wander away from my favorite place. It never seemed like we could spend enough time in our spots. But it is the same in life now; there is never enough time to just sit and observe, there are always things to get back to.

My experience at the Environmental School has never left me. I still love being outside, and I find so much joy in the few moments I can find time alone in the outdoors. I am seriously considering a minor in environmental science, and perhaps pursuing a career in environmental law or lobbying for a greener world. Whatever I do, the love for the outdoors that was fostered at the Environmental School will make me continue to fight for the rights of our environment, and remember to seek those few quite moments alone where I can reflect on the world around me.

-Kelsey

There is no doubt in my mind that the best times I had at Goodwillie were during the trips we took, spring camp in particular. Being alone with my peers and nature was an eye-opening experience that unfortunately I don't think I'll ever have again. I can still specifically remember the hike to the Sleeping Bear Dunes and spending the night in a tent that any wild animal could invade at any second. I felt vulnerable, but I liked it. The atmosphere was had an innocent air, like everything in it was unexposed to the raging city life. Throughout the week, I was caught off guard by the serene setting near the lakeshore and it has affected my mindset as to how I treat nature completely. At GES, I learned to respect the natural earth, and today I still try to find little ways to play my part in preserving and conserving it because I know that if I treated the great outdoors with a fake passion to save the planet like everyone else, I would be giving in to an attitude I don't believe in.

-Kathryn

One of my favorite memories of GES was on the first day of school, when they had everyone gather around the council fire. I looked around, knowing a couple people, but not many. I was scared. I had never been sure I'd even wanted to come to this place, and right now, I was almost positive I didn't. G started talking to us, and told us that this was our new family. He then started telling us about the woods being our new classroom, and the this school being our new home away from home. I didn't really understand why someone would want to be at school. It took me only an hour to realize that this place was made for me. G and E were amazing at dealing with us. We were all scared, and shy, but they managed to get us talking to each other within a couple hours. As I got on the bus to go home, I was already waiting for the next day to begin. For the next two years, school was my favorite place to go. I'm glad I went there.

-Stephen

My best memory from GES is our spring camping trip of my 5th grade year. I will never forget going out and camping on Lake Michigan. That night night was clouded by a vicious lightning storm, and watching the storm pass from the comfort of my semi-dry tent was a memory that will always linger in my mind.

GES had a profound impact on the rest of my life. Right now I am at University of Michigan's College of Engineering, where I am studying environmental engineering, hopefully going into alternative energy resources. GES opened my eyes to the beauty of nature, and has encouraged me to help preserve its sanctity from the global warming epidemic that is sweeping the world. I owe my ambitions to GES and will do my part to ensure a sublime future for the woodlands of Michigan."

-Joe Sugiyama

immediately headed west to the Lake Michigan shoreline since it would soon be too dark to follow the path we had taken to get there. Initially, feelings of frustration and anger towards the park ranger fueled our steps, but they were soon replaced with a sense of camaraderie and determination as the adventure became uniquely ours.

Reaching the shoreline, we built an enormous driftwood fire as the sun set across the placid water. We continued our trek heading south, stopping at midnight to unroll our sleeping bags for a brief rest. Finally, at 3 o'clock am, we arrived back at base camp where the other groups were asleep, knowing nothing about our extraordinary experience.

Looking back, I realize the impact that my two years at GES has had on me. The 'Goodwillie Experience' is something that creates a foundation of strong character that its graduates carry on into their lives. For this, I am truly grateful.

-Carl

Intrepid explorers? Hearty adventurers? Stalwart soldiers perhaps? No, we were mere sixth grade students led by our fearless teachers Mr. G and Ms. K. It was our backpacking trip in Sleeping Bear Dunes in the late spring of 2004 when we found ourselves turned away by a state park ranger. We apparently did not have the proper license to make camp where we had already pitched our tents. Despite the persuasive arguments of our teachers, we were forced to begin our long hike back to base camp. We