



# The AEOE Newsletter

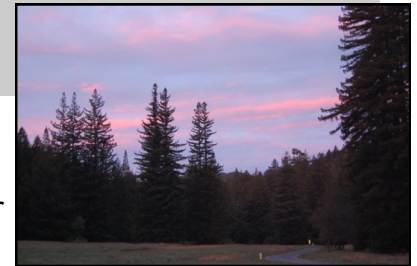
WINTER 2012

“Must we always teach our children with books? Let them look at the mountains and the stars up above. Let them look at the beauty of the waters and the trees and flowers on earth. They will then begin to think, and to think is the beginning of a real education.”

- David Polis

## Fall Conferences Shine - A Message from the Northern Chair

Happy Winter, everyone! I had the pleasure of attending both of the Fall Sectional Conferences on back-to-back weekends in November. I've always wanted to head south to one of the Southern Fall Conferences and am glad I did so this year after running around chairing the Northern Conference. It let me see a new site - Rancho Alegre - and meet a number of new friends and re-connect with others that I don't get to see more than once a year.



Though we had some rain at both events, the camaraderie and spirit of community that everyone shared warmed my soul. We had our highest attendance in at least three years for the Northern Conference, and I heard many rave reviews about the quality of the workshops, the beauty of Little Basin, and the connections made at the conference. I want to thank the Conference Committee, especially Heather Butler, our Site Liaison, and Reed Schneider, the Workshop Coordinator. Thanks also to all of the volunteers who helped out in many ways during the conference, and beforehand, soliciting and picking up food donations from many local businesses, including

Continued on page 7

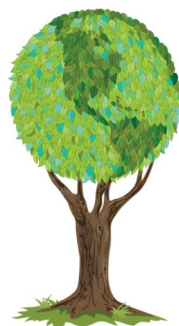
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## Hooray for the Southern Fall Conference!

### A Message from the Southern Chair

Held again at Rancho Alegre, the weekend was filled with fun, growth, adventure – and did I mention fun? Most of our 70 participants arrived on Friday night in the midst of a rain storm, and the dorm spaces quickly filled up. Two night hikes were run by the host site's staff: “Old Man Murphy” (a scary hike) and a “normal” night hike which was tasked to scare the Old Man Murphy group.



Saturday held our workshops, including some Mad Science by Meghan Lockwood, rescuing Abraham Lincoln in hot air balloons with Bryan “Rain” Snyder, and a look at some educational theorists and how they apply in outdoor education with Laura “Leaf” Vandezande. Saturday night was a “burrito” potluck, and no one went hungry. Chips, tortillas, beans, meat, purple toppings and vegetarian toppings stretched the length of a great buffet table.

**SPRING STATEWIDE  
CONFERENCE INFORMATION  
INSIDE!**

Continued on page 7

## It's Almost Here - The 2012 Statewide Spring Conference!



### ***Little Blue Marble*, April 13-15, 2012 at Camp Hess Kramer in Malibu, CA**

This year's theme, ***Little Blue Marble***, is from the famous Blue Marble photograph. This photograph of the Earth was taken nearly 28,000 miles away in space on December 7, 1972 by the crew of *Apollo 17*.

### **Call for Presenters**

AEOE is searching for qualified workshop presenters for the Statewide Conference.

Workshop strands and potential workshop topics will be posted on the AEOE website, [www.aeoe.org](http://www.aeoe.org), by mid-January 2012.

There will be several workshop lengths (tentatively 60, 75, and 90 minutes), and a very limited number of 150 minute slots which are intended for those that will need to travel off site or have other specific needs for a longer duration. Please keep in mind that these longer "double workshops" are typically not as well attended because participants don't get to attend as wide a variety of workshops.

The application form will be posted online at [www.aeoe.org](http://www.aeoe.org) by mid-January and must be received by March 3, with preference given to those received by February 25.

Presenters must be members of AEOE. Accepted presenters will receive a discount off of their conference registration (this year's costs have not yet been set, but last year's discount was \$50 - \$75 off).

If there are multiple presenters for a workshop, only the primary presenter listed on the application will receive the presenter discount. You are free to work out with co-presenters an evenly divided discount share on your own.

Contact the Spring Conference Workshop Coordinator, Robb Stolberg, at [northern.chair@aeoe.org](mailto:northern.chair@aeoe.org) if you have any questions.

### **Call for Volunteers**

AEOE is also searching for volunteers to assist in preparation leading up to the Statewide Spring Conference as well as throughout the Conference weekend. These positions include strand coordinators, auction coordinator, and MC for Friday and Saturday nights, as well as assistance with scholarships, parking, composting, registration table, and others. Please let us know if you're willing to devote some time before the event or even just an hour at the event. Remember, AEOE is completely volunteer-run, and that includes you! For more information or to volunteer, please contact the Conference Chair, Gregory Lewis ([southern.chair@aeoe.org](mailto:southern.chair@aeoe.org)).

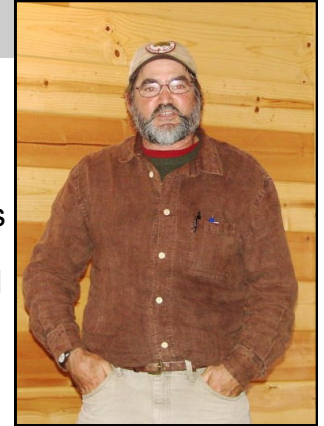
We look forward to sharing this amazing, educational, and fun weekend with you!

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## 2011 Northern Section Environmental Educator of the Year – Garth Harwood

By Robb “Big Brown Bat” Stolberg

Garth Harwood helped get the Northern Sectional Conference started right by encouraging us all to think of everything that allowed us to enjoy the weekend, starting with the sun, the soil, the plants, the animals which give us energy and beauty, and the family and friends we surround ourselves. On Saturday night at the Conference, we again heard from Garth as he received recognition as the 2011 Northern Council Environmental Educator of the Year. Garth has been the Director of the Hidden Villa Environmental Education Program (HVEEP) for over a decade after several years working with the Audobon Society. Despite directing the program, he is still directly involved with teaching students most days.



The program at HVEEP combines curricula from a working organic farm – which raises both plant and animal crops - and wilderness education. "In both our farming operations and in our educational work, we strive to create a sense of connectedness between natural ecology and organic farming, and between self, farm, and the wild," said Harwood. Daniel Chmielewski, an environmental education intern at Hidden Villa, said, "Whether it's a presentation on local reptiles with students on night programs, a talk on owls with the South Skyline Association, a hike through the Hidden Villa wilderness with kids searching for wild edibles, or the migratory patterns of birds with interns, Garth is always on the frontlines."

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*"His creativity and love and enthusiasm for natural beauty is contagious..."*

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Logan Rosenberg, a former staff member at Hidden Villa, said "To watch Garth work with these children is amazing. Their faces are rapt with attention as he tells stories of Green Herons fighting with kingsnakes or they are giggling as he provides the sound effects of the bug ambulance to move the darkling beetle out of the trail. Garth has a fine-tuned sense of what makes kids work and he uses it to considerable advantage."

Chmielewski spoke to Garth's involvement with the intern program. "Six new interns arrive every year with a diverse background in teaching, environmental education, and a whole host of experiences that relate in order to be a part of the change that we wish to see in the world." Rosenberg continued, "His creativity and love and enthusiasm for natural beauty is contagious; learning from Garth means gaining a sense of wonder, reveling in what our senses teach us and a perception of what it means to take nature as a partner in learning." Harwood led a workshop during the Conference entitled "Teaching with the Ancestors at Your Back." We're happy to have our Environmental Educator of the Year teaching right before our eyes!

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The **Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education** supports and inspires educators in their quest for the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to help all learners understand, appreciate and care for their environment. As an integral part of achieving our mission, we encourage direct experience outdoors.

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## 2011 Southern Environmental Educator of the Year — Paul Grafton



By Justin Canty, Kyla Grafton, and Elizabeth Roberts

Paul "Buzzy" was a mainstay naturalist at Rancho Alegre for years and eventually became the Director of the program for three years. He then moved to KEEP in Morro Bay for nearly four years before taking on a job at Rancho El Chorro for the 2011-2012 school year. Paul has always inspired naturalists and people with his unique ways of captivating kids, coyote trickery, and soft spoken and gentle demeanor.

Each program has been bettered by his presence. He started a native plant nursery and sent hundreds of native plants home with his students. He has created composting programs for his sites and enhanced ones already in place. He developed Woodland Discovery Camp, a summer camp program so students could further their interest in environmental education even after the school year had finished.

Even though he has contributed significantly to program development in each of the sites where he has worked, Buzzy's real legacy is felt by each of the people he has touched. From his students to their parents, high school chaperones, school administrators and teachers, as well as his staff and co-workers, Buzzy has touched thousands of lives. He creates community wherever he goes and inspires people to be their best. Whether plunging a clogged toilet, performing a new campfire song to 150 6th graders, or requesting funding from executives of corporations, he treats each task as important and worthy. This in turn makes the people whose lives he has touched feel important and worthy.

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*"He creates community  
wherever he goes and  
inspires people to be their  
best."*

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In addition to working as a naturalist, assistant director and director Buzzy has served as an AEOE board member. He has helped organize conferences, including scheduling the keynote speaker and entertainment for the 2004 state conference. He has conducted workshops on nature writing, the role of play in learning, positive discipline, and bird, butterfly, plant and lichen biology at yearly conferences.

Paul is extremely deserving of this award. He has dedicated his life to the field of environmental education. He has developed and enhanced meaningful and effective programs that have touched the lives of thousands of children. His work has inspired countless individuals to be better stewards of their environments and really gives kids a "warm and fuzzy" feeling about being outside.

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## 2012 Howard Bell Award Nominations

The purpose of this award is to give recognition and pay tribute for outstanding achievements and contributions as a leader in the field of environmental and outdoor education. The award is presented at the Statewide Spring Conference by the AEOE Leadership. While not limited to any certain profession, nor exclusive to AEOE members, the award is designed primarily for individuals who are still active in their work. Each member of AEOE has the opportunity to nominate someone whom they feel deserves consideration for this award. Nominations are kept on file for three years and may be voted on by the Board as many as three times.

**Candidate Information:** (may be filled out online at [www.aeoe.org](http://www.aeoe.org))

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Does this person know you are nominating them? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Will this person be in attendance at the Spring Conference? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know \_\_\_\_\_

Also include:

1. Significant Reason for nominating this person (outstanding achievements, contributions, etc)
2. Professional History (recent positions, background, leadership, areas of interest)
3. Other relevant background (education, affiliation, publications, speeches, etc)

Mail nominations by March 1 to:

**AEOE State Coordinating Secretary, Heather Butler:**

**220 Cloister Lane**

**Aptos, CA 95003**

**or e-mail: [hbutler@wolfschool.org](mailto:hbutler@wolfschool.org)**

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## AEOE's Membership Cycle

### An Update from Helen de la Maza, AEOE Membership Coordinator

Starting in 2010, AEOE moved to a new membership cycle to simplify the membership process. There are two possible membership cycles for all Individual and Institutional members:

**Cycle 1**—Calendar Year: January 1 - December 31

Expiration date: December 31

Anyone joining/renewing between January 1 - June 30 will have an expiration date of December 31 of the same year.

*Example:* Join or renew April 5, 2012; membership expires December 31, 2012 (covers spring and fall conferences)

**Cycle 2**—School Year: July 1 - June 30

Expiration date: June 30

Anyone joining/renewing between July 1 - December 31 will have an expiration date of June 30 of the following year.

*Example:* Join or renew October 1, 2012; membership expires June 30, 2013 (covers fall and spring conferences)

We encourage Individual and Institutional members to renew annually to take advantage of being active members for 12 months.

**To join AEOE or to renew your membership**, please complete and return the membership enclosed in this newsletter or visit [www.aeoe.org](http://www.aeoe.org). Any questions can be addressed to [membership@aeoe.org](mailto:membership@aeoe.org). Thank you for your support!

## Announcing the AEOE Colorado River Canoe Trip

**March 30-April 1, 2012: \$70 per person (includes canoes, camping, and shuttle) \***

Join us for another great adventure down the Black Canyon section of the Colorado River! We will be camping Friday night at Lake Mead, and then we will head down the river Saturday morning and get picked up Sunday around 3:00 p.m. Spaces are limited to 15 people - sign up before January 31 to reserve a spot!

### What to Expect

- Beautiful hot springs and sauna caves after moderate hikes
- 11 miles of calm downstream canoeing
- Wildlife sightings—possibly peregrine falcons, bighorn, cormorants, etc
- Fun company with great people
- Sunny during the day and cool at night

### What to Bring

- Camping gear & food
- Water shoes or sturdy sandals
- Dry bag or large garbage bag

Contact the Southern Outings Coordinator Bryan "Rain" Snyder for more information or sign up at [southern.outings@aeoe.org](mailto:southern.outings@aeoe.org). Be sure to check out [www.aeoe.org](http://www.aeoe.org) for more details!

**\*Must be a current AEOE member**



**Message from the Northern Chair, from page 1**

ENH at Sempervirens, New Leaf, Staff of Life, Safeway, Haven Harvest Farm, CASFS, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe’s.



Though both of the Fall Conferences were fun and very successful, I already can’t wait for the Statewide Spring Conference, which will bring together amazing people from throughout California and beyond. I hope that 2012 will be a great year for you and I look forward to seeing you in Malibu!

-Robb “Big Brown Bat” Stolberg

**Message from the Southern Chair, from page 1**

Our members really stepped up to the plate with some great acts at our Saturday night campfire. Rhymin’ Reason played some great songs to start us out, and other musical acts included an extemporaneous tin whistle and a pair of recorders being played by one person simultaneously – one through each nostril! Skits, stories, and songs surrounded our announcement of **the Educator of the Year, Paul Grafton**. Paul works at KEEP Ocean, having worked previously at The Outdoor School for many years. **Congratulations Paul!**

Sunday brought our weekend to an end with a final set of workshops and a closing ceremony where the participants distilled their experience down to just a word or two, and then in the style of our host site, the group jumped simultaneously in to the air and yelled a primal “YES!”

I want to thank our participants, our presenters, Educator of the Year Paul Grafton, and the conference coordinator Carrie Raleigh for the work and joy brought to and created at the conference. I hope to see you all – North and South – in the Spring for the Statewide conference.



-Gregory Lewis

**Follow us on Facebook! And don’t forget to check the AEOE website for updated organization information, educational resources, job announcements, and much more!**

Visit [www.aeoe.org](http://www.aeoe.org) today!

## Is Outdoor Environmental Education Experiential?

By Tim Parker

My suspicion is that most outdoor environmental schools would classify themselves as being “experiential.” By this they generally mean that they provide direct experience with the content being studied, that content being natural history, and the experience being in direct contact with nature. But direct experience alone is not the litmus test for terming a program experiential. Instead we must ask if such a program is following the pedagogical approach of experiential education known as the Pattern of Inquiry. This term comes from the writings of John Dewey who is generally regarded as its main literary proponent.

The Pattern of Inquiry is both a description of how students learn and Dewey’s recommendation for how teachers should approach instruction. The student begins with an experience that is new to them. Through this experience a question arises. The student then draws on what they know to form a possible answer to the question. The final step is testing their idea to discover if they are correct. This is in essence the scientific process. But Dewey believed it could be applied to the other disciplines such as history, English, music, art and even religion. For example, a teacher who wanted to teach history experientially would not ask students to memorize past events and timelines. Instead, the teacher would guide students in an attempt to discover more about human nature as revealed through history. The students might explore such questions as “What causes wars?” And, “What form of government produces the happiest society?” From such questions they would research and develop theories as to the nature of human society. The final step would be testing these theories and even finding application for them in their daily lives.

According to Dewey, and other proponents of experiential education, this approach has some significant advantages to that of methods that use direct instruction. By direct instruction I mean the use of only text books and lectures. The first is that the Pattern of Inquiry requires students to be mentally active. They must draw upon past learning, be creative, and make predictions about the future. The assumption here is that this high level of mental activity actually increases the students’

abilities to be better critical thinkers. A second benefit is that the learning has an element of future potential in that it contains the learning of a skill rather than a fact. For example, students being told how far away the moon is can only remember and repeat the information. Students who have learned how to apply math and observations of the moon can actually use trigonometry to determine the distance to not only the moon but also to several of the planets. Third, the students have created the solution to the question and thus the learning “belongs” to them. They created the learning so it is theirs to value. A common education phrase aptly expresses this notion, “We hear what others say but we remember our own words.”

So as outdoor educators are we experiential? We certainly can be if we are finding ways to help students ask questions, formulate hypothesis, and then test their thinking. And as outdoor educators we also have an advantage over the classroom setting. Nature often begins this learning process for us. Students may ask, “Will the frog jump before or after I touch it? Is that a fish or a tadpole? Why can Billy skip and rock and I can’t?” As outdoor educators we are at our best when

we can use these teachable moments and expand our students' curiosity to scientific inquiry. We can guide them into questions such as, "Why did the frog jump when it did and not earlier? Could this be a behavioral adaptation? And, what scientific test could we do to see if the theory is true?"

But there is another aspect of John Dewey's writings on education that deserves mention. This is the concept of "democracy." By democracy Dewey was not referring to a governmental system, but rather the sharing and participation of the society in the learning process. Consider how most major scientific problems are explored. Groups of scientists team together for an investigation and often publish their results to share with the wider society of scientists. We as outdoor educators use this practice often as we instruct students to gather in a circle. In so doing we are modeling several important ethical issues that relate to learning and to our society at large. First, the understanding of nature, as well as all avenues of learning, begins in the field and not with a book or teacher. Second, learning is open to all group members. Third, the potential learning for the entire group can be enhanced as members find significant ways to support each other's ability to contribute to the group<sup>1</sup> (it should also be noted that these concepts form the basis of the adventure education field's curriculum.)

But are the concepts of democracy and the pattern of inquiry just for our students? No, I believe they find importance in education only because they are universally applicable in our society. This would include businesses, associations, charities, and even religious institutions. This is in essence what Dewey was saying when he wrote, "If education is life, all life has, from the outset, a scientific aspect."<sup>2</sup> So if we return to the question of whether an outdoor school's program is experiential, we must qualify this determination not only by its approach to instruction, but also by its staff's interactions with each other. Do they genuinely support each other in an effort to solve the school's common challenges? If so, they will not only improve their organization's effectiveness, but will also improve the individual lives of their coworkers.

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916. & John Dewey, *Experience & Education* 1938.

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, 1897. (This quote is probably the source of the popular saying, "Life itself is education," which is often erroneously attributed to Dewey.)

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**Are you interested in contributing to *The AEOE Newsletter*? Do you have an idea for an article that may be of interest to outdoor educators?**

If so, we would love to hear about it! Contact *The AEOE Newsletter* editor, David Dimitrie, at [newsletter@aeoe.org](mailto:newsletter@aeoe.org) for all the details. Deadline to submit articles, photos, and information for consideration for the Spring 2012 Issue of *The AEOE Newsletter* is February 1.

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