

The LaPorte County Soil and Water Conservation District wants to acknowledge all of the individuals and organizations that made our recent Coastal Awareness Month event a great success. We applaud all of the obvious dedication not only to education, but to water quality. The Great Lakes provide 20% of the world's fresh water supply, homes to countless fish and other organisms and a place for people to play, relax and refresh their souls.

The Lake Michigan DNR Coastal Program cannot be recognized enough for making funding for this type of educational opportunity available to our students.

The partners that came together were instrumental in utilizing these grant funds and providing unique programming to the community:

The staff of the W.G. Jackson and the Annis Water Resources Institute braved less than perfect lake conditions to bring the boat to Michigan City for the benefit of our students. They also provided excellent instruction in the use of high-tech water quality sampling tools. This hands-on, interactive science is invaluable to students today.

Brian Breidert and his staff at the Department of Natural Resources allowed students to get up close and personal with native fish friends and our invasive fish foes. This allowed them to understand the delicate balance of freshwater ecosystems.

Maggi Byrne and Erik Sprenne led an enthusiastic crew of volunteer Paddlers from the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association in delivering some phenomenal kayaking instruction. Many special thanks to Kenneth Nesbitt for driving the kayaks from Michigan for the program!

Thanks to Erin Crofton and Amber Horbovetz of Save the Dunes for their coordination assistance with the many small details and keeping all the presenters on schedule both days. We can always count on you.

Esther Guncheon and Olga Shturmina –Welch from the Lubeznik Center for the Arts provided wonderful instruction in the art of fish printing. The fish prints were wildly popular as well as beautiful. What a wonderful, playful, creative experience!

We absolutely CANNOT thank Mayor Chuck Oberlie enough for his personal donation to the event. This selfless gift demonstrates his commitment not only to our natural resources, but to the children of LaPorte County. Thank you, Mayor. Your gift will always be remembered.

Special thanks to all the wonderful participants who braved cold and windy conditions for the chance to share this unique educational opportunity. We especially appreciate your patience with cruise cancellations due to weather conditions. Your cooperation to ensure your safety was gratifying.

Last, but certainly not least, our thanks to the Board of Supervisors of the La Porte County Soil and Water Conservation District for their on-going commitment to conservation education in La Porte County. Without your whole-hearted support we could not continue to seek grants to provide innovative education opportunities like this for our County.

The staff of Lake Hills Elementary and Dr. Eason-Watkins should be commended for their recognition that students cannot ever be expected to care for something that they have not experienced. It is our conviction that these students will respond as stewards when they hear about the Asian Carp problem or other threats to the Great Lakes, for they have touched a fish, sampled the water and learned about ways to enjoy it themselves.

Sincerely,

Nicole Messacar

Education Coordinator
La Porte County Soil and Water Conservation District