



New Ecology Center at Herring Ridge Offers Unique Science and Character Education Programs



The YMCA opened The Ecology Center at Herring Ridge in the fall of 2005. Herring Ridge is a remarkable 1400 acre property and 140 acre lake open for exploration by students, educators, researchers and more. Programs, developed by Pam Clark and Dan Vanden Heuvel, are one of the most unique residential programs available in the country. Our natural environment lends itself to teaching hands-on science classes, conducting ongoing research projects and facilitating teambuilding. All of the programs have been developed from standard North Carolina science curriculum.

Fifth grade students from various schools throughout Wilkes County have taken part in our Planet Herring Ridge Environmental Education program. The program is based on the book *The Lorax* by Dr. Suess. Students spend 3 or 4 days on a “new planet”, learning and interacting with characters from the book. Herring Ridge Staff work hard to spread the message to students about the importance of conservation, reducing pollution, and protecting our environment by providing students with ideas to implement in their everyday lives. Opening night includes a play (a sequel to *The Lorax*) entitled “Unless”, which begins the journey by capturing students’ imagination through rhymes and laughter. The performance brings to life a storybook that engages students, instilling values and environmental knowledge. Other components of the program include teambuilding, forest ecology, water ecology, wetland ecology, people’s relation to the land, and a final culminating game with clues, spies and fun review questions. The program turns knowledge into action by having students’ plant a tree on property as their final task.



In addition, middle school, high school and college students can take advantage of our Brushy Mountain Outdoor Lab. Students collect their own data and are able to download and compare what they have collected with other schools through an interactive website.

Herring Ridge also runs a full teambuilding program. We facilitate all types of groups on our high and low ropes course and also offer overnight package deal. We strive to be a leader in strong facilitation and run our program on the choice model philosophy giving students the opportunity to set goals for themselves and work towards

those goals.

Feedback from teachers has been extremely positive as our Environmental Education season continues. Educators and parents are encouraged to call and set up a time to visit Herring Ridge. Feel free to visit our website: www.campharrison.org and/or contact the Conference and Environmental Education Director Marty Cronin at (336) 921-7035 for more information.

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