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Thursday, September 6, 2012

# A Summer In Dayton with the Rivers Institute...

Amy Price

Today I was walking up the stairs to Zehler to stop in and see the lovely Bethany Renner, and as I was walking up the stairs, I was having flashbacks on the incredible summer that I spent working for the Rivers Institute. I was part of an incredible summer team that successfully completed many tasks including planning the steward orientation, developing the River Leadership Curriculum, and running summer programs for hundreds of people from preschoolers to adults. We all had our own specific tasks, but we really worked as a team. We had some great bonding moments, a lot of learning experiences, and developed new skills. I could write hundreds of blogs about my summer, but I will just try to hit the highlights.

My favorite programs out of the summer were our programs with Daybreak. We did two programs with the Daybreak shelter, and I felt like we really had the opportunity to see transformation right before our eyes. Both groups kayaked in the Blue Hole at Eastwood metropark, and both groups had a good time. After kayaking, the group headed over to the lagoon for some art projects by the river. The first group painted picture frames representing their past, present, and future, and the second group painted old records to resemble the album of their life or their theme song. Obviously both of these activities were not directly tied to the river, but the students were sitting in the shelter house next to the river and reflecting on their life. The art projects turned out to be very powerful and emotional works of art, so we managed to run an eco-retreat with these students. In the closing discussions with both groups students shared about how they learned to trust each other when they were out on the water. They said they learned how to encourage and support each other. They said they felt like they were closer after having that experience. Many of them also shared how much they want to connect with nature more and kayak again. The best thing about the program was just seeing the students come in with fears, frustrations, and negativity but leave excited, inspired, and calm. It was really an incredible program.

Another great group was the Dayton Jewish Community Center teachers. The very first program of the summer was for the teachers of this preschool, and the goal of the program was to inspire them as they begin developing nature trails on their property. For that program, the teachers spent time kayaking the lagoon, discussed some readings about children losing nature, and also tried out some water education activities. Similar to Daybreak, some of the teachers came in very hesitant, scared, and negative, but we watched them all leave completely inspired to make the most of their nature trails. They were all like little kids leaving the playground! It was a fun program and challenged the group because it was two days into our summer.

Other programs we did included: All ages at Adventure Central, St. Albert's youth group, Peru and Argentina Marianist high school students, YMCA boys camp, and many others. I think you can determine that I had a great summer just based on the length of this blog! So in conclusion, I have found that my summer internship has really prepared me as a future science teacher because I am extremely comfortable teaching all ages, I am confident in my ability to trouble-shoot and manage groups, and I learned how to work as a team. I am so thankful to have spent my summer here on campus working for the Rivers Institute with Leslie King, Bethany Renner, Alex Galluzzo, Jill Pajka, Andrew Kowalski, Anthony Whaley, and Taylor Pair. For the first time ever, I was not disappointed that I did not go abroad because I would not have wanted to be anywhere but Dayton for the summer.