

Strands of Straw

The newsletter of the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center



Franciscan Earth
LITERACY CENTER

Spring 2014

Get ready for Summer Camps



It is not too late to sign up for one of our summer camps. Visit our website to learn about all the camps and get the registration form. The camps cover many different areas of interest. We have camps about gardening, animals, peace, science, extreme games, connecting with the Earth, and surviving in the woods. There is scholarship money available for those who cannot afford the registration fee. Contact Sr. Shirley at 419-448-7485 or sshafranek@felctiffin.org for more information.

“ Update from Sr. Shirley:

We are finishing up our worm bin project. Two Catholic schools have had worm bins in their classroom all year. In April they harvested the compost made by the worms and planted seeds in the compost. In May they will bring some of the plants to our campus where we will plant them on our grounds for everyone to enjoy all summer long. The students also kept some of the plants to plant in their gardens at their school. The students have been able to see the complete cycle of life—from worms to compost to plants back to food for the worms and compost once again.

The month of May is busy with school programs. Jacob and I are taking many hikes in the woods to look at the wonders. To hear a child say this is the first time she/he has been in the woods is good to hear. To see the wonder in the eyes of the students as they look at jaw bones, salamanders, and other crawly things is amazing to see. To have the kids turn up their noses as they smell and taste ramps, garlic mustard weed, and wild onions is funny to watch. It is a blessing to be able to show the kids how wonderful our creation is and hopefully to learn to respect creation and help take care of what God has given us. I feel truly blessed to be able to work with the young people in so many different ways. ”

FELC would also like to thank Columbian High School for their help in putting up our high tunnel hoop house. Without the help of over 40 of their student volunteers, we would not have been able to get the frame up and the cover on. The hoop house should now be ready to use to extend the growing season this fall.

Community Gardens



Beginning in May, FELC will be hosting community garden plots available for anyone to participate in. The plots are available with garden training provided by volunteer master gardeners. This will allow anyone to participate, regardless of experience, and be given the skills to grow their own produce. Grants are also available to pay for plots, seeds and training for those who may not be able to afford the participation fees.

For more info on any of our programs, email earthliteracy@felctiffin.org or call 419-448-7485. And make sure to visit us on our Facebook page

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Mystery Bus Tour



FELC and the straw bale house were one of the destinations for a Van Wert mystery bus tour. Approximately 80 visitors on the tour were not told where they would visit on their trip to Tiffin. The tour stopped at the straw bale house in the morning for a tour of the house and a presentation on how it was built. The buses then stopped by a number of Tiffin area attractions including Ballreich's and Crystal Traditions.

Update from Sr. Jane:

“ Our Little Portion Green sailed through this brutal winter just fine. The temperature was comfortable inside and the many sunny days warmed up the house during the day. Despite the cold, we had 131 people visit the house over the winter.

Half of the young trees that we planted in the Fall didn't fare as well however. We lost all the pine trees and some of the fruit trees, so we'll try again. This spring and summer we will continue to expand our permaculture landscaping. The pergola will be attached to the front of the house to complete the architectural design. My brother Pete will come up from Brooklyn, NY to head up this project. The guys from CROSSWAEH facility continue to assist in the upkeep of the yard and other ongoing projects. ”

Summer Project

An earth block shed with a living roof is in the works for late summer and will be an eagle scout project of Jacob Amlin. This will prove to be another very innovative attraction at the site and provide needed storage space. The concepts of both the living roof and the earth blocks can be used as an educational demonstration of sustainable building.

Straw Bale House Tours & Brunches

Spring/Summer straw bale house tour hours have returned. If you are interested in a tour of the house you are welcome to stop by from 7-9p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month. Weekend brunches are also offered by appointment only. For more information or to schedule another tour or brunch, contact Sr. Jane at 567-207-5393.

To be removed from this e-newsletter, please contact earthliteracy@felctiffin.org.