

FRESH from the Garden

School Garden Summer Workshops

After a year of virtual outreach, we are thrilled to offer a hands-on, in-person professional development opportunity at three locations throughout the state.

Our Forsyth County workshop has reached capacity; please use the waitlist option to help us determine the demand for an additional workshop date in that area.

Conversely, due to low registration, we have canceled the Beaufort Workshop. We hope that folks considering that location will be able to make it to Greenville, NC (Pitt County) on June 22.

And to round out the geographical regions of NC, we've got a good group signed up already in Haywood County, but there is still space available on June 24. We'd love to see you in the mountains, piedmont or coastal plains. [See full details here.](#)



Forsyth County

Haywood County

Pitt County

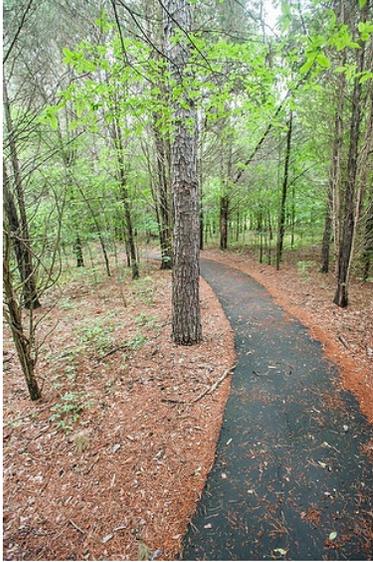
Teacher Feature: Lenora Barron

Lenora Barron has been a physical education teacher for 34 years and will be hanging up her whistle this year. After starting her career in Virginia, she came to Weddington Hills Elementary in Concord, NC, the year it opened, now 25 years ago. While she has coordinated many field days, as you might expect, her legacy at the school will be the nature trail and her leadership of the Nature Trail Club.

Weddington Hills sits on 68 acres of land. Lenora says that it was an intentional effort about 18 years ago to create a school yard habitat and focus on creating a nurturing nature environment. She worked with a landscape architect initially who helped craft a 3-phase plan, which she planned to implement in 3 years. She laughs, thinking back on that and says, "We haven't even finished Phase 1 yet!" She estimates that over the years, they've acquired around \$150,000 in grant funds, but also credits volunteers and several Eagle Scout projects for enhancing and maintaining their nature spaces.



A key piece of infrastructure is a half-mile, paved, handicap accessible nature trail along which you can find wetlands, a



butterfly area, bird feeding areas, labeled tree specimens, and houses for birds, bats and owls. There is even an outdoor classroom. The trail is open to the public on weekends and during afterschool hours helping to build connections with the community.

Lenora explains that bird feeding is not simply filling a bird feeder, but planting native food sources that support the bird population. At one time, they had a “Mealworm Café” where they raised their own mealworms. They support the monarch population which is a favorite thing for kids to observe and learn about the life cycle. A dedicated pollinator garden in one courtyard has more than 100 species of plants that support pollinators.

Students must apply to be part of the Nature Trail Club that meets after school 2-3 days a week. Initially, it was only open to 5th graders and Lenora could manage 20-25 students. It’s currently an option for 3rd-5th graders and with the younger kids, she’s found that a smaller number is easier to work with and make sure that everyone can stay busy. “The kids have done nearly all the planting,” she says.

Each year as part of the end of year celebration, those students who have worked more than 50 hours in the Nature Trail Club get special recognition, and Lenora treats all the club members, regardless of time worked, to an afterschool ice cream. While the students do most of the work year-round, they host a Campus Cleanup Day, where breakfast is provided and families pitch in for 3 hours on a Saturday morning to tackle larger tasks.



Not long ago, a younger student was hesitant, almost scared, to head down the nature trail. She confided, “I’ve never walked through the forest before.” Lenora said, “That’s ok, I’ll be right here and we’re going to have the best day ever.” Which were the child’s exact sentiments as she returned, “This has been the best day ever.”

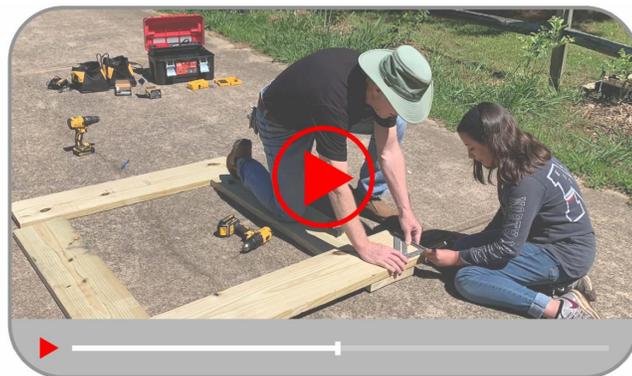
It’s those moments that make retirement bittersweet. Lenora says if she weren’t moving to South Carolina, she’d be back to volunteer regularly. In her retirement she plans to continue visiting National Parks, having already checked off 31. While the pandemic curtailed lots of in-person opportunities, Lenora is glad that she had the opportunity to share virtual field trips to several national parks with her students. To excite them about hiking, kayaking, or just getting into nature has been a mission accomplished.



Video Resources

Here are the latest videos from Amy and Doug. Be sure to check out our STEM To-Go playlist for more helpful videos.

- [Building a Raised Bed with Students](#)
- [Putting Your Garden to Bed for Summer](#)



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Questions? Contact us!

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