

## SIXTH GRADERS VOLUNTEER AND LEARN AT FUNKS GROVE

On Thursday, May 16th, the Olympia Middle School sixth graders spent most of their day at nearby Funks Grove. The purpose of this day is to promote understanding and education about the biodiversity which surrounds us in Central Illinois and to encourage each student to become stewards of our natural world. Students were divided into groups to move through various stations of working, learning, and having fun.

Each group spread mulch around the general vicinity of the Sugar Grove Nature Center, a task which normally would've required many volunteer hours for far fewer people. Some students pulled invasive plant species from areas of prairie grass and flower beds.

All students were guided through a nature trail to become more aware of the animals and plants with whom we share our world. Specifically, students learned about our shrinking prairie and invasive species which have devastated certain tree species.

Students learned a wide range of information throughout the day. Students were alerted to the dangers of not being careful near railroads by Operation Lifesaver safety specialist, Chip Pew, and an officer of the Amtrak police force. Students were fascinated by Illinois fossils and meeting a turtle and snake up close! A classroom on wheels provided education about protecting wildlife habitats, and how to prevent invasive species from invading our local environment.

Each group of students made s'mores around the campfire and enjoyed some down time. We were fortunate the day was sunny and warm - almost 80 degrees by the time we departed.

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