

(?) NAI - REGION 7 NEWSLETTER (?)

Re-Energize Re-Invigorate Re-Commit Re-Involve Re-New

Winter 2007, Volume 16, Number 4

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To be filled!



From the Region's Director:

This last newsletter of 2007 has an informal theme – **renewal, re-invigoration, and re-involvement**. Only a month ago, I was in Wichita being re-invigorated by fascinating programs, productive business, good friends, and the City of Statues (my nickname for this city with AMAZING interpretive statues throughout the area where the conference was located). For the first time in many years, I did not have a session to present, an auction to organize, or a workshop committee in which to participate. I was able to focus on my regional director responsibilities, attend sessions, and soak up the energy of the workshop. Even a month later, I am actively implementing ideas gained both for our region and in my own personal interpretive endeavors. Throughout this issue of the newsletter, you will find opportunities to invigorate and involve yourself in Region 7 and have a great start on your personal 2008!

As your Regional Director, I attended the full day Regional Leadership Committee meeting, sat in on the full day Board Meeting, attended the annual membership business meeting, and presided over the regional business meeting. No organization – from family households to US government – survives and thrives without tending to business and NAI is no exception. The Regional Leadership Committee is an opportunity for all the regional directors to get together for one full day of business. We bring concerns from our regions to the full group; we give feedback on national business and bring reports back to the regional members; we share challenges, solutions, and successes. Taking part in the leadership of NAI is one way I can give back to my professional organization and help ensure its success and growth. The opportunity to interact with peers on a business level is an aspect of the job I cherish. I establish a “bond” with the other Regional Directors which is different from other relationships formed during other times of the workshop.

(Karin's letter continues on page 3)

“Where in the Region” Winner is Kathryn Jones!

Kathryn Jones identified last issue's picture as Bosque del Apache NWR near Socorro, N.M.

“I work as an Interpretive Ranger with four state parks in southeastern New Mexico, helping to design, plan, present and report on programs. My base of operations is Living Desert Zoo and Gardens State Park in Carlsbad, New Mexico, a zoo accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) that exhibits plants and animals native to the Chihuahuan Desert. I began working at Living Desert as a docent in 1999 and then was hired for a summer season at Brantley Lake State Park north of Carlsbad in 2000. In the winter of 2000, I was hired as one of the first interpretive rangers when New Mexico State Parks began a state-wide interpretive program. At Living Desert State Park, I work closely with a corps of dedicated docents to present programs such as our annual Zoo Camp. I also work with amateur astronomers to present public astronomy programs, an average of one per month for the last six years. I have organized several teachers' workshops through the local university on a variety of topics and also present diverse natural history programs ranging from A to Z, arthropods to zoology.”

Many thanks to Juli Niemann, USFWS SW Region, Landscape Architect/ ORP/Accessibility Coordinator - Albuquerque, NM for submitting the entry!
Thanks to all of you for sending pictures to your regional newsletter, Mooselips! -ML

Re-invigorating Re-energizing Region 7

We heard you loud and clear at Wichita – the Region 7 team is ready to re-establish Region 7 as the best region in the nation. We heard from lots of you that you were ready to give time and energy to the Region – we'll be calling on you!

Some changes headed your way:

Re-name the newsletter?

Do you like the name "Mooselips" or would you like to see a new identity for your newsletter. Let us know. E-mail your suggestions to Paul Reimer at p.reimer@comcast.net.

E-Mail Newsletter

We'll be moving forward by providing the newsletter by e-mail. You'll be able to opt in to the electronic format or keep receiving the newsletter by mail. The first e-mail version will be available later in 2008. Start letting us know if you want the e-mail version by sending your preference to p.reimer@comcast.net. Be patient, we're going to take our time to make the transition and probably won't have all the bugs worked out until the end of 2008.

Update the Website

We'll be updating the website right after the first of the year. If you have any suggestions on the update or have any announcements you would like posted on the website – e-mail LJeanStrand@comcast.net. -ML

Region 7 Meeting Minutes - Wichita

The Region 7 officers are Karin Hostetter – Chair; Linda Strand- Deputy Director; Bonnie Jakubos- Treasurer; Ken Soderberg- Secretary

- Karin reported on the decisions made during the NAI Executive Board meeting including restructuring so that both Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman each report directly to the board. A new position will be advertised that will focus on sales and marketing; job descriptions for NAI staff positions will be updated in the coming year; the board passed a "Green Business Practice" initiative; new international partners / franchises have been added in China, Greece and France, NAI will get a % of each membership; NAI unveiled a new logo; Karin reminded those attending the regional meeting that all NAI meetings not considered an executive session are open to all members; the strategic plan is available for review and comment on the NAI website.
- Region 7 has 584 members, this number is up after the New Mexico workshop. We have \$23,577.52 in the Region 7 treasury. Karin reminded members that each NAI region gets a percentage of the National Workshop funds after the conference expenses and revenues break even.
- Discussion was held regarding the Legacy Trust Fund; Amy Galprin moved and Biff Baird seconded that Region 7 give \$1500 to the Legacy Trust fund & the motion carried. This fund is used to pay off the mortgage on the central office building.
- A question was raised about a previous donation made by Region 7. It was clarified that the region had made a previous donation to the Key Donor campaign.
- Dick Taylor passed away this year. Dick was a dedicated member and leader within NAI. Dick established a trust fund will establish a scholarship program to send folks

(minutes continued)

- from 3 specific counties in Colorado to NAI. Karin will provide additional details.
- Paul Reimer has been faithfully getting the newsletter out to Region 7 members. To support the "Green Business Plan" initiative discussion was held regarding the pros and cons of sending the newsletter out electronically. Karin will be canvassing Region 7 members via e-mail with their preferences for a paper vs. electronic copy of the newsletter. (If you have read this far you can e-mail your choice to Karin as well.)
- There was discussion regarding holding a regional workshop. Nothing is set for 2008. There is the possibility to work with Paul Caputo to do a graphics workshop in 2008; there is also an opportunity to partner with the Colorado Open Space Alliance who will be hosting Sam Ham in Estes Park in September. Members should consider regional workshop topics, dates and locations and pass them on to Karin.
- The Region 7 NAI booth was discussed. We would like to have a booth at the NAI workshop in Portland. If you are interested in helping contact Linda Strand. -ML

Meet a Regioner!

Name: Carol Leasure

Years in Interpretation: 32

Where: Colorado State Parks- Currently Owner, Pine Squirrel Creations

Greatest Moment in Interpretation: "Leading a fully Blue Moon hike on New Year's Eve- I thought no one would come- we were overwhelmed with participants and had a great time!"

Words of advice to other interpreters:

"Live what you believe in"

ML



Where in the Region?

Site description:

"This Refuge (public land) sits in the shadows of the Mission Mountains in northwest Montana. It was established by Teddy Roosevelt and will celebrate its centennial in 2008. Its 18,700 acres of native Palouse Prairie provides homes to a variety of wildlife, including its namesake, the largest land mammal in North America."

Send your guess of this site's name to p.reimer@comcast.net!

(Karin's Letter continued from page 1)

Here is a summary of important items from those meetings:

- The national **strategic plan** is moving forward. The plan focuses on the direction of the future of the **profession** and then how NAI can fit into this profession direction. Drafts were available at the workshop and a request is out for volunteer "readers" to go through it. The Board will look at the input and progress with the plan in the spring.
- NAI has a **new logo**. It is updated, simplified, and more flexible for use with regions, sections, workshops, and more. You will start seeing it used immediately.
- A new MOU with University of the Aegean for an international NAI **affiliate in Greece** was accepted to join already existing China and Korea.
- NAI adopted a **new core value** to incorporate green practices for sustainability in business practices as much as possible when sound running of NAI is not compromised.
- Tim and Lisa have been in meetings with the Executive Board and a mediation team to work out issues to ensure the future success of NAI: oversight of Tim and Lisa's positions, major fundraising on the development level, and sustainability of the certification process. Progress is coming along and the next years will continue refining solutions.
- The **African American Experience** section was dissolved as a separate section and became a branch of the Cultural Interpretation and Living History section.
- The **Membership Directory** will soon be online only. Members will be able to go into it to retrieve information and update their own contact information changes. This will allow the directory to be more useful by being more timely in current information.
- In keeping with the new "green" practices core value, the **NIW proceedings** was available this year for the first time on disc only – no hard copies. In addition, **InterpNews** will no longer be printed and mailed. Instead, its information will be incorporated into the online newsletter InterpNow which will be expanded to include more information.
- **National election winners:** President – Jim Covell; VP Administration – Lynn Youngblood; Secretary – Nancy Stimson
- **Regional Directors** elected to represent regions on the National Board: Roger Riolo (Region 10), Kelly Ferrell (Region 6), Amy Force (Region 8), Julie Champion (Region 1); alternates are Brad Block (Region 5) and Karin Hostetter (Region 7)

Whew, and this is only the highlights. Keep reading the newsletter for more happenings and ways to be involved.

Have a holiday season and new year filled with happy memories and safe times.

(continued - next column)

DO YOU LIVE IN UTAH or NEW MEXICO?

Join the Region 7 Officers
as the Utah or New Mexico State
Representative

e-mail Karin Hostetter at: interpret_this@hotmail.com

2008 Region 7 WORKSHOP

Put a hold on May 28, 29 and 30, 2008
Make plans to get to Fort Collins, CO.
Join us for the Region 7 Workshop

Presentation Topics:

- Graphics for the front-line Interpreter (tri-fold brochures, one page program flyers, and newsletter graphic do's and don'ts.
- Web – site Tips
- Your presentations.

Make the Workshop a SUCCESS:

1. Volunteer to work on the organizing team.
2. Send us your ideas for 1, 1.5 and 2 hour sessions.

IT CAN'T HAPPEN WITHOUT YOUR HELP!

E-mail all ideas to LJeanStrand@comcast.net

GET INVOLVED IN 2008

You always get back more than you give! We have many opportunities for you to work with peers and help set the direction and opportunities for your Region. Below are the committees with a brief description. The names listed are those that volunteered at NIW. If you would like to volunteer, contact Karin Hostetter (Regional Director, Interpret_this@hotmail.com) or Linda Strand (Deputy Director, LJeanStrand@comcast.net). We will compile the names for each committee and get you in touch with each other to get started. Right now, the sky's limit and you can let your imagination soar!

Membership – Ideas include creating a welcome packet for new members, contacting lapsing memberships to see if we can serve them better, thank you notes to donors, surveys if/when needed. - Alana Mesenbrink

Scholarships – We have regional guidelines for our scholarship program. We need a group to review those and suggest changes, if any. Applications need to be solicited and winners selected. - Todd Marts, Mary Ann Bonnell, Kelli English

Awards – Again, we have regional guidelines for our awards program. We need a group to review those and suggest changes, if any. Applications need to be solicited and winners selected. - Kelli English

Communication – Create and maintain ways to communicate with members. This might include assisting the Newsletter Editor with article ideas, getting the regional booth to events in the region, keeping the website up to date, etc. - Linda Strand, Liz Wickard, Kristin Libberton

Finance/Fundraising – Our treasury is in GREAT shape. We received over \$10,000 for hosting NIW in Albuquerque. Now we can be creative. What items might we develop as interpretive aids? Do we want seed money for a fundraiser? Is there some we want to author and publish? The possibilities are amazing! - Carol Ryan, Alana Mesenbrink

(Karin's letter continues on page 4)

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(Karin's letter continued from page 3)

Workshop – Do we want to continue with alternating every other year with a regional workshop and traveling workshops? Find locations, publicize event, solicit presenters, plan schedule. The Deputy Director is the chair of this committee by National guidelines, but he/she cannot do this alone. We are already looking into a regional workshop for May in Fort Collins highlighting Paul Caputo for a day on how to create simple flyers, but there is more to work into a workshop than just one day-long presentation. - Linda Strand (chair), Carol Ryan, Doug Knudson, Alana Mesenbrink, Liz Wickard

Strategic Plan – A couple years ago Doug Knudson led a small group of people to create our first strategic plan. Now it needs to be reviewed and revised if necessary plus be sure that action items have a process for being implemented. – need volunteers

Nominations – 2009 is a regional officers election year for Region 7. We need an election chair to coordinate the process (National takes care of a lot of this, it is an online election, and there is written guideline to follow so the job is easy) AND we need people interested in running for an office. Offices are Director, Deputy Director, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Contact Karin for information on any of these positions or to volunteer to run or chair.

Look at this list and consider how your talents and interests can be used in the region. If there is something you would like to do but do not see a place for it here, give me (Karin) a call or send an email and we will see how best to incorporate your gift.

HAVE YOU VISITED THE NATIONAL WEBSITE?

You might not realize what a store-house of information the NAI website is. Each issue of the regional newsletter will highlight a different spot on the site. To start the new year, find out what your professional organization holds as its foundation. Go to the main website at www.interpnet.com. On the left side bar, choose "About NAI" then click on the 7th item in the pull down which is "Mission, Vision, and Core Values." You will notice that the new core value on sustainable business practices is already on the site. Not only can you find out what NAI stands for, but you can also use these bullets to help you state your cases when necessary with supervisors or to let supervisors know what NAI is and why you should be involved with it. Go a step further and figure out what your personal core values are in interpretation. Where do your values mesh and where do they differ from NAI's? ~ Karin Hostetter (interpret_this@hotmail.com)

SHARE your ideas, rants, epiphanies, haikus or photos with the rest of **REGION 7**.

Do you have something funny or even embarrassing that has happened to you during interpretation?

C'mon, Share it!

Region 7 Newsletter DEADLINES

March 1 June 1 September 1 December 1

Submit to Paul Reimer: p.reimer@comcast.net



Fran Blanchard and Mary Ann Bonnell get destructively botanical at the National Workshop.

NAI National Workshop a Great Success!

For those of you that celebrated NAI in Wichita – wasn't that a great conference? For those of you that couldn't make it, please join with us in celebrating the accomplishments of these Region 7 members.

Region 7 Workshop Speakers

Mary Ann Bonnell, Diane Gaede, Debbie Holmstrom, Charyl Hazlit, Richard Jurin, Betsy Leonard, Kristen Libberton, John Luzader, Jerri Spellman, Linda Strand, David Thomas, Joy Thompson, Jamie Whitlock, Liz Wickard (Hopefully we didn't miss anyone, please let us know so we can add your recognition in the next newsletter.)

Region 7 Scholarship Recipient

Jamie Whitlock – graduate student at Colorado State University

Region 7 Media Awards

Wayside Exhibit – Extreme Environments, Amazing Life Forms, **Yellowstone National Park** Division of Interpretation

Multi Media – Windows into Wonderland "Getting Into Hot Water" Electronic Field Trip – **Yellowstone National Park**

Region 7 Professional and Service Award Recipients

(Full length descriptions of the good work these folks have done is available on the NAI website – www.interpnet.com)

Douglas Knudson – NAI Fellow

Doug is a Professor Emeritus from Purdue University and resides in South Fork, Colorado. He now serves as the president of the Old Spanish Trail Association. Doug says "My life is my message". His continued support of interpretation as a profession is recognized with this award.

Dick Taylor (In Memoriam) – Excellence in Interpretive Support

Dick was a docent and volunteer for the City of Colorado Springs as well as Region 7 Treasurer. Dick had a passion for interpretation that translated into years of service and recognition through this award.

(National Workshop continued on page 5)

(Successful National Workshop continued from page 5)

Dick will continue to give to NAI members for many years. He left a \$25,000 charitable annuity that will fund scholarships to the National Workshop for residents of El Paso, Fremont and Teller Counties. The first scholarships will be available for the 2009 conference. The eligibility criteria and selection process are yet to be determined. If you reside in those counties and want to participate in the development of the award process, please e-mail me at LJeanStrand@comcast.net.

Memories of Wichita from Region 7 members:

Alana Mesenbrink - USACE from Libby, Montana highly recommended the session and follow up website on the vandal resistance of different sign materials. For those of you who want to catch up on the research being done by Jim Buchholz with the University of Wisconsin – log onto his website at www.uwsp.edu/schmeeckle/interp/workshops/vandalism.

Alana also volunteered to hand out the nightly newsletters that conference attendees find under their door every morning. If you didn't get one and were staying at the Hyatt, Alana is willing to take the blame. *"After 17 floors that all look the same, who's to say we didn't accidentally invite the pilots staying at the hotel to the workshop instead . . ."* *"I can't tell you how many people would open the door, and say "thanks for the delivery" each night"*

Linda Strand from Aurora, Colorado just remembers being overwhelmed with pride at seeing the other Region 7 folks from Aurora making outstanding presentations. "The creativity that comes out of Mary Ann Bonnell, Joy Thompson, and Liz Wickard just continues to astound me."

Dee DeJong – Guides to Go from Littleton, Colorado The highlight for Dee was *"getting ideas and energy from old and new colleagues throughout the week. NAI rocks!"*

Please let all of these Region 7 members know how proud you are of them and their accomplishments.

We'll be working on a scholarship process for the 2008 National Workshop in Portland. Be sure to look for more details in the next Newsletter.

Advertise in Region 7 Newsletter!

If you are in an interpretation related business and you would like to reach out to nearly 600 NAI members, consider placing an ad in Mooselips! Place just one ad in one edition (1x), or do a whole year (4x)!

Size	1x/year	4x/year
Bus. Card	\$15	\$50
¼ page	\$25	\$85
½ page	\$50	\$175
Full page	\$100	\$350

Comings and Goings!

Well folks, your intrepid editor here...there has been quite a flurry of personnel changes going on within Region 7 since the last newsletter; let me see if I can set you straight:

Linda Strand has moved from Colorado Representative to take on the position of Deputy Director that was recently vacated by **Fran Blanchard** who, after years of dedicated service to Region 7 has moved to snowy Wisconsin to complete her Masters, congratulations Fran!

Joy Thompson of Aurora Open Space and **Kristen Libberton** of Bluff Lake Nature Center have agreed to co-chair the Colorado Region 7 Representative position. Way to go, Joy and Kristen!

Bonnie Jakubos has moved from successfully fielding both the Idaho Representative position & the Region 7 Secretary position to become Region 7 Treasurer, a post vacated by **Dee DeJong**, and a thank you to Dee for *your* years of dedicated service to our marvelous region!.

Bonnie's Idaho Rep position has been filled by former Utah Rep **Lonnie Manning** who serendipitously moved to Idaho and was able to immediately take on that role.

Peg Sorenson, previous New Mexico State Representative has moved to Washington D.C. leaving that position open.

New Region 7 Secretary is **Ken Soderberg**. Welcome Ken!...whew!!! That means that we have an opening for a Representative for the State of Utah!

Send inquiries about this exciting volunteer position to Karin Hostetter or Linda Strand. -ML

Carl Norbeck to lead Audubon Society of Greater Denver

Carl Norbeck will be taking the helm of the Audubon Society of Greater Denver starting January 1, 2008. Carl was selected to lead the group because of his experience in establishing public-private partnerships and in managing diverse environmentally oriented organizations. Carl will become the face of Audubon in the Denver area as he retires as Manager of the Watershed Section of the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission. He is also active in the Clear Creek Watershed Foundation that he helped establish in 1997.

Prior experience includes the Director of the Center for Public-Private Sector Cooperation through the University of Colorado at Denver and Executive Director of the Thorne Ecological Institute. Audubon staff includes Susan Smith, CIG, as Education Director. ASGC operates the Audubon Center at Chatfield State Park and represent their members interests within the South Platte basin in Denver, Colorado.

The Audubon Board is excited to work with Carl and welcomes him to the organization. -ML



The
**Colorado Alliance for Environmental
 Education**
 presents the 8th Annual

Teaching OUTSIDE the BOX Conference

April 25 – 27, 2008
Winter Park, Colorado
**Snow Mountain Ranch/YMCA of the
 Rockies**

Classroom activities – Networking opportunities
 A beautiful setting in the heart of the Rockies.
 Recreation, rejuvenation, and inspiration.

This Conference is for YOU!

Teachers – Students – Youth Group Leaders
 Naturalists – Interpreters – Environmental Educators
 Providers of EE materials – Businesses

**Anyone who appreciates learning about the
 World where we live!**

More than 50 sessions to choose from – conference topics will include nature and outdoors, stewardship and sustainability, research, trends and techniques, arts and culture, technology, and more . . .

Full and half-day workshops on April 25.

Register by March 7, 2008 for the lowest prices! Costs will range from \$95 to \$339 depending on meals and lodging options. Scholarships are available.

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

Have a great idea, research, program or techniques to share with your peers? Present something new or tried and true. All are welcome to apply.

See www.caee.org or call 303-273-9527 for details.

CAEE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing environmental education through a balance and collaborative approach. Check out our programs, membership and state of the art environmental education directory at www.caee.org.

NSI Investigators Solve the Crime

The afternoon was cold with light rays filtering through wispy clouds, small snowflakes dancing and twirling in the afternoon breeze as the NSI (Nature Scene Investigation) agents made their way down the trail and past the small observation deck to the south side of the pond. An anonymous tip from a park visitor had sent them to this area to look for a kill site, and the agents were following up. Complete with investigative kits full of hand lenses, rubber gloves, plastic bags and the like, the agents used their keen senses of sight, smell and hearing to find the site. Suddenly a cry rose into the chilly afternoon air, alerting the agents and sending them scurrying to a location under a large cottonwood, where one of the female agents stood, pale in the afternoon light, pointing to the ground. The scattered feathers, drops of blood, and bone fragments left little doubt as to the fact that the agents had found their kill site. After the initial shock, they set to work, donning rubber gloves, collecting evidence into plastic sandwich bags to be taken back to the crime lab and investigated. The NSI agents were very thorough; not a tree was left unexamined, not a stone in the area left unturned. When the scene had been fully processed, the agents returned to the lab and processed their clues, all the while asking themselves the usual questions: What was the nature of the crime? What was the victim, a hapless mallard, doing in the area? Who was the perpetrator? And, above all, what was the sequence of events that resulted in the bloody pile of feathers on the ground?

Sound like something off of TV? Maybe the idea was, but the scene was very unique! The “agents” were kids between the ages of 6 and 12, all participating in a Day After Thanksgiving Nature Camp at the Morrison Nature Center at Star K Ranch in Aurora, Colorado. The camp was designed to give parents a place to leave their kids for a fun filled nature adventure while they shopped for little Johnny or Janie’s Christmas gifts. For the second year in a row, the camp was filled to capacity. The morning was full of activities designed to get campers in the “NSI” frame of mind, including a “Preda-TOUR” of local predator adaptations and a chance to see, and create wildlife tracks outside in the newly fallen snow. After lunch and a short nature-related video, the crew received their mission: to find and investigate a kill site that had been reported by a visitor. Armed with a morning’s worth of information and investigative “training,” campers set out to find and process the site. Upon returning to the nature center and aided by mugs of hot cocoa, campers used microscopes, pelts, skulls, and field guides to try and determine what had happened at the site. The grand finale came when, at the end of the day, the campers presented their “evidence” and the conclusions they had drawn from the clues they had found. Not surprisingly, most groups came to the same conclusions: a mallard duck had been attacked, killed and eaten by something, either by a coyote, a great horned owl or a person. Only as their parents were arriving to take them home did they learn the truth: Naturalist staff had planted the kill site as part of the day. Though some of the kids had suspected this all along, most were genuinely surprised; however, all of them left having learned a little, and enjoyed the Day After Thanksgiving Nature Camp thoroughly. Who knows, maybe next year, it’ll be Survivor Day After Thanksgiving Camp.....

Joy Thompson - CIG, CHI

They Said It!

"I work at a Nature Center that offers programs to school kids. I was teaching a group of 4th graders how to use a dichotomous key to identify trees in the park. The kids get so excited about finding the tags on the trees and then when they find the right answer they want to be the first to say it.

In all the excitement one girl rushed to say Red-Osier Dogwood but it came out "Red-Otter Bark - Wood". We all had a good laugh."

**Kathy Donnell
Park Naturalist
UCEE
Jordanelle State Park
Heber City, UT**

Have some stories to share? Send them in! -ML

The Benefits of Botanizing

While there are many benefits to teaching about plants, I like to emphasize the following two things to interpreters who are afraid to "go green":

1. Plants do not run away. Plants may be the only living thing within a one-mile radius after you unload a bus full of 65 children.
2. When teaching about plants, one or all of the following topics is sure to surface: sex, poisoning, weaponry, survival, dispersing children, robbery, and pharmacy. These are just a few really obvious ones. When it comes to hitting on Universal Concepts, plants have more than got you covered.

So, with those two compelling points in mind, it makes sense to botanize with visitors and guests. Here are some great themes I have worked with since I decided to "go green" about 13 years ago. You may find them useful for your site once you flesh—I mean leaf—them out with examples from your own ecoregion.

Wildflowers have an agenda that goes beyond looking beautiful (I stole this one from National Public Radio). In this guided walk, PowerPoint, or other plant program, you discuss the real reason for those lovely blooms, which is successful sexual reproduction, of course.

Fighting herbivory takes sophisticated weaponry. My fellow botanista, Fran Blanchard and I use this theme to describe how PDMs (Plant Defense Mechanisms) manage to keep the botanical axis of evil (herbivores, drought, scent marking, freezing, etc.) at bay.

Trees are made of gas (this one is from my friend, Kirk Johnson, at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science). Ask the average person where a tree gets the ingredients to make tree parts and many will answer with either soil or water, the truth is that most of a tree (more than 88% in most cases) comes from carbon dioxide which is removed from air and turned into tree parts. For more on this, look for our upcoming book, ***Gas Trees and Car Turds: a Kid's***

Guide to the Roots of Global Warming, due out in July of 2007.

In this field lies a pharmacy. We all can relate to illness and cure, so discovering the medicinal uses of plants is a wonderful way to connect people and plants. I like to provide both information on American Indian uses (a great resource is the ethonobotany database) and what I call "comfort" plants. These are plants such as burdock, mullein and chicory, brought by pioneers as ready meds for the kitchen garden. Of course, many comfort plants are now noxious weeds, so you can also teach about the woes of importing plants from far away, which brings me to my last suggested theme...

Be very wary of plants from Eurasia. If you are not yet concerned by and educating everyone around you about the danger of noxious weeds, you should be. Even if all you do is make people aware of the problem and able to identify a few list A species, you have done more than nothing at all. If you were still on the fence about sharing the wonders of plants with your audiences, hopefully this will help you grow under it.

Mary Ann Bonnell – CIG, CHI, CIT, CIM

"The Case of the Missing Cell Phone"

Have you ever wondered what the various jobs of a prairie dog are? We've watched them grooming each other, chasing other groups of prairie dogs out of their territory, and warning family members of the approach of predators with a bark-yip. A trip on the prairie with a group of 6th graders this past spring gave us insight into yet another job of these versatile "dogs". The event occurred when students from West Middle School spent a morning making observations and measurements in a prairie dog colony. As I came along to ask why their group seemed to be troubled, I was told that one of the girls had been "texting" her friends instead of listening to the program and had just dropped her cell phone into one of the prairie dog holes! Distraught about this occurrence she wondered if we could get it out for her. I asked if anyone in the group knew how deep prairie dog holes could be and they were surprised to hear that 10-15 feet was not unusual! A resourceful parent chaperone offered to use her phone to call the "missing phone". To our disappointment we could not even hear the ring tone because the phone had slipped so far down the burrow. Sadly we agreed that the phone was lost for good.

Not true! A month later I went out with a similar group interested in prairie dog towns. Remembering the incident I recounted the story of the lost phone. As the group dispersed to perform their investigations in the same area, I soon heard a yell from one of the girls, "I found a cell phone," she called. Thinking that she was joking and still enjoying the story I went to her group to investigate. Imagine my surprise to find that she truly had found "the" cell phone! Thus we had evidence of another busy prairie dog occupation – housekeeping. The prairie dogs had found the phone and cleaned up their burrow by removing the phone to the outside of the mound. Good communicators that we are, we called the school and soon a father arrived to retrieve the phone from our office. He said: *"I never did believe the story and was sure my daughter had made it up, this is going on a plaque on our living room wall."*

Barb Hamman - CIG

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