



## IN YOUR BACKYARD



The vote is unanimous—we're going green.

Regardless of political agendas and public policies, it is decided. Spring is here.

Spring, nature's version of going green, is a perfect time to rediscover the beauty in your own backyard. As gasoline prices go out of this world, you may be staying closer to home, so why not enjoy your environment as much as possible?

**The Crooked Creek Environmental Learning**

**Center** is a great resource to help you enjoy the outdoor green while preserving your out-of-pocket green.

With two buildings set on more than 31 acres of park, meadow and forest, there is ample room for your group to meet for the day, night, or weekend.

You are invited to visit our center and participate in our programs as a learner, leader or volunteer.

The ELC can help you to realize that so often, "There's no place like home."

### ARE YOU AN ENVIRONMENTALIST?

- Do you breathe air?
- Do you eat food and drink water?
- Do you take up space (couch potatoes included)?

If you answered 'yes' to the above, then consider yourself one. Our environment is wherever we live.

Environmentalism is responsible management of our resources, wherever and whatever they may be. The ELC promotes environmental education and responsible resource steward-

## ELC OPEN HOUSE

Rain or shine, the ELC plans to have something for everyone at their open house, from **10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, May 10.**

A variety of exhibits will be on display. You can also take a guided walk with naturalist Dave Beale or catch a reptile and amphibian presentation by Terry Laux. Food will be available. Admission and fun are free.



## The Mission of the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center

Is to preserve, promote and manage a unique multi-use facility that provides resource conservation education for the community of learners at large.

The ELC officially welcomed over 4,000 visitors last year to their 31 acre complex, located in the Crooked Creek Park, Manor Township. Among them were students from elementary, high school and collegiate programs from several counties whose learning was enhanced by hands on participation as well as instructional and research programs.

Adult learners participated through community programs such as beekeeping and wilderness survival. Many organizations use the ELC facility for daily, overnight, and weekend programs and retreats. These include the Crooked Creek Dam Quilters, Venture Outdoors, and the Family Counseling Center. Countless others walk the trails and enjoy just visiting the center

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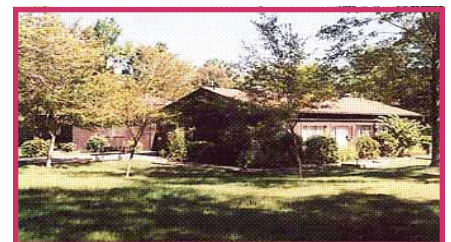
## More About the ELC

Once the nation's only environmental learning center operated by the Army Corps of Engineers , the **Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center** was built approximately 30 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, on approximately 30 acres of park, meadow, and forest in Manor Township. Armstrong County has no county or state parks and the ELC was a invaluable learning resource. According to David English, Executive Director of the Armstrong Educational Trust, "For this reason, when the Army Corps closed the ELC in 2000, the AET chose to assume its operations". "To accomplish this," he adds, "we established a steering committee with representation from schools, environmental and conservation agencies, and community groups." English sees this as a successful alliance. "We've seen growth in programs and learning as a result of this partnership."

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### ELC FYI

- The ELC is not supported by tax dollars.
- The ELC is funded by grants , user fees, donations and sponsors.
- Donors receive a variety of benefits, according to their level of giving.
- Donations of \$100 or more are permanently recognized on the ELC Donation Tree.
- The ELC is an ideal place to meet, with a spacious classroom/ dining/kitchen building and large adjacent lounge available for use
- Our dormitory accommodates 26 people with seven sleeping rooms, washrooms and hot, indoor showers!



## Take A Hike

Fortunately, for the ELC, Dave Beale is not offended when asked to “Take a hike.”

A lifelong nature lover, this forester for the Armstrong County Conservation District is also an ELC steering committee member and tireless volunteer program leader.

On Sat May 10, Beale will share his insights while guiding tours of the discovery trail during the ELC open house. And, Beale seems to see it all.

Did you know that there are at least nine types of violets native to this area? Beale has seen four of them so far this spring. An American bald eagle was also recently spotted over the trail. Beale tracks the return of song birds and other critters.

So, put on your walking shoes to join this nature expert and “Take a Hike!”. Would-be hikers should allow at least 45 minutes to complete the trail.

## From Dennis' Desk

You probably won't find Dennis Hawley at his desk if you visit the ELC. That's because Hawley, Program Director of the ELC, is doing just what his title says, directing programs!

Spring is one of the ELC's busiest times. Our calendar is full right now,” Hawley



says. “We're booked solid with student groups until the end of the school year.

Under the direction of this environmentalist, students

of all ages will be learning about/the world around them, and like Hawley, learning is often done by doing.

If your child is interested in similar fun this summer, check out the Young Naturalist Outdoor Adventure Camp, July 14-18, (8a.m.-4p.m.), at the ELC. Space is limited and open to students ages 8-12, so call 724-

## Blind observations

Situated just beyond the entrance to the ELC's Discovery Trail is a small, timbered structure that looks as if it has been there since pioneer days.

This is not a piece of history

—this is the ELC observation blind. This blind provides you with a place to sit, undetected, somewhat protected from the elements, to watch your woody neighbors..

Once inside, you realize that you can really see the forest for the trees. The “sounds of silence” help you realize that you are not alone, either. So, try our blind, you never know what you'll see!

## ELC WISH LIST

Donation of time, talent, goods, and services are also appreciated. If you can spare any of the following, please contact Dennis Hawley, ELC Program Coordinator, at **724-763-6136**. Our list includes: Paper towels, light bulbs, garbage bags of any size, and liquid soap for dishes and/or hands. The ELC is always looking for volunteers, too. If you'd like to help with current programs, or have an idea for a program you'd like to lead, call us!

## SOME OF THE TOP REASONS TO VISIT THE ELC

- Our green won't take much (if any) of your green
- You can turn off your cell phone and blame it on us
- You can spy on the neighbors—the animal ones, that is in our nature observatory
- You can go nose to nose with a black bear (courtesy of taxidermy)
- You can quote poetry, chapter and verse, on our unique poetry hiking trail
- The secret recipe of our herbs and spices is known only to Mother Nature, and possibly a master gardener educated at the ELC, so check them out in our herb garden
- You and yours can appreciate the true natural beauty that we so often take for granted.

