

## Thank You 'Ranger' Ed!

As 'Ranger' Ed retires, Bluffview thanks him for his on-going contributions.



For over seven years, Ed Lagace has worked to foster in Bluffview Erdkinder students an appreciation and knowledge of the natural world. His passion for protecting and understanding our resources has been evident as he patiently engaged students in discussion and experience.

In addition to the learning opportunities he presented, Ranger Ed was instrumental in communicating with Friends of the Refuge Headwaters (<https://friendsoftherefugeheadwaters.org/>) to secure funds for field trip busses and camping. He arranged and delivered journaling supplies from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ([https://www.fws.gov/refuge/upper\\_mississippi\\_river/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/upper_mississippi_river/)). The financial contributions of those organizations, thousands of dollars, were a significant factor to making trips possible.

Ed led the students in interesting, informative discussions that engaged them in active learning. Any one of his sessions would have been valuable as a “stand-alone” presentation, but having him in the classroom throughout the years created two main advantages: a greater familiarity and the ability to connect topics to previous lessons, thereby enhancing all sessions with greater student engagement and a “bigger picture” of environmental connectedness and stewardship. His presentations re-enforced concepts from classroom lessons and activities on standards-based science curriculum.



Because we had numerous experiences arranged, each individual session could be “linked” or “tailored” to our current curriculum topics, but also to previous (and future) visits, enhancing the overall depth of understanding for students. The students achieved a comfort level with Ed – they knew what to expect, knew they could ask questions and receive thoughtful answers, knew they could engage safely with activity and opinions. Regular visits enhanced the experience and created something more than the sum of the individual opportunities.

Maria Montessori stated “Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.” Ed’s respect for and value of the individual was apparent with each of his visits to the classroom and his refuge outings as he honored the input, thought process and ideas of each student, fanning our inner lights.



Ed’s classroom sessions included investigation into a plethora of Erdkinder curriculum topics - food webs, ecosystem management, native, invasive and endangered species of the area, karst geology, scientific research and monitoring, the black boot-sucking muck at the bottom of the river, the refuge history, ethical and responsible management and “ownership” of the refuge, genetics and migration of animals. Fall, winter and spring refuge outing activities included

nature exposure and observation, invasive species mitigation, litter clean-up, outdoor safety and survival, boating, fishing, invertebrates, hiking and of discussion wildlife habits and habitats, land use, evidence of management practices, snowshoeing, bird watching, solo reflection and more. All explained with an unending awe for all nature has to offer, in a way that related to and guided young people on a journey of inquiry and discovery - the poetry and music always a beautiful enhancement.

Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac*’s preface states “What better way to fight the destruction of nature than to place in the hands of the young people this powerful plea for a land ethic.” Bluffview Erdkinder cannot express enough thanks to ‘Ranger’ Ed for all the years of integrated, enthusiastic, engaged exposure to nature and placing into our students’ hands a powerful land ethic message.

As Ed’s truck pulled out of the Prairie Island driveway at the end of our last trip, a flock of pelicans tipped their wings and flew overhead. Coincidence? Perhaps. Or maybe a final tribute to a well written chapter in the lives of so many Bluffview students.

