

# BHS students explore the natural wonders of Washington state

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**BELMONT** — Over April vacation, a group of 17 Belmont High School students, along with science instructors Adrien Deshaies and Sarah Deuell and a team of chaperones, set out on the experience of a lifetime when they flew off to Mount St. Helens and Olympic National Park in the State of Washington.

The students, for the most part, were all part of the Earth, Environment and Ecological Stewardship class at BHS who have shown an interest in careers in the outdoors.

"I want to be a park ranger one day and this was a fantastic trip. My parents were right. There's a whole other world out there, outside of New Hampshire," said junior Pierson Cluett.

The weeklong trip,

which culminated in scientific and social experiences at Olympic National Park, began with a few days of research at Mt. St. Helens though, a place familiar with teacher Deshaies.

"I came here years ago, when I was working on my Masters degree, and was excited to go back there again with my students," he said.

While the volcanic mountain itself is reserved for scientific research, the class was able to stay at the Mount St. Helen's Institute of Science and Technology, overlooking the volcano.

Each morning, they arose to breathtaking scenes of the cloud-shrouded volcano then headed out along the surrounding ridges for some research of their own.

Deshaies said strict regulations in the area kept them on the trails but they were still able



A team of students, teachers and chaperones from Belmont High School's science program spent their April vacation learning about the natural world at both Mount St. Helens (shown here in a group photo) and Olympic National Park's "NatureBridge" program in Washington State.

to collect data regarding plant growth, ground cover and other natural observations made at various elevations along the way.

Many students went on to use that data for their final projects once they returned to Bel-

mont.

"It was amazing to see how motivated the students were," he said.

For sophomore River Mathieu the experience helped confirm his interest in wildlife biology but the views of Mount St. Helen alone left a

lasting impact on him.

"I really enjoyed the entire trip, but it was amazing to see the devastation from that last big eruption," he said.

The volcano is still somewhat active today, registering daily seismic activity as it builds a slight dome of lava or spews some ash, but so far it is nothing that is readily evident in the area.

Despite nearly four decades of clean up efforts, many remnants remain on the rugged slopes though and the students were awed by the effects they could observe from an actual volcanic eruption that took place as recently as 1980.

Junior Elizabeth Nix said she was amazed to still see the devastation on the ridges that lie in the path of the eruption.

According to one report the eruption, which occurred on May 18, 1980 at 8:32 a.m., had approximately one and one-half times the force of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. It blew more than 13-hundred feet off the top of the mountain, sending dense smoke and ash more than 80,000 feet into the air.

"You could see a line where all the trees in the forest were knocked down from the blast. They were huge," she recalled.

When the group arrived at Olympic National Park though, more challenges began as they took part in NatureBridge.

NatureBridge is a national program that connects youth to the outdoor environment where participants are immersed in the natural beauty of national parks such as Olympic, Yosemite, Golden Gate, Santa Monica Mountains, Channel Islands, and Prince William Forest.

The program began in 1971 as the Yosemite Institute and since that time has expanded its outreach. Today it encompasses more than 700 schools and 30,000 students and teachers every year. Bringing life changing experiences to more than one million students since its start, NatureBridge is at the head of the class when it comes to hands on environmental education at their six locations.

As part of their final project for NatureBridge, the group worked to improve a trail intersection, grading a muddy area to

SEE EXPLORE, PAGE A13

## Special Belmont places celebrated May 21 at Heritage & Preservation Fair

**BELMONT** — From Belmont Elementary School (BES) fourth graders of Mrs. Vicki Donovan's class to a senior center painting class student, all ages and still more organizations have created a first-time "Heritage and Preservation Fair" in Belmont this Saturday, May 21 from 10:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. Presented by the Belmont Public Library and Heritage Commission, the free activities include community celebration, healthy walking around the Village, learning some local history, and how to research your family or home.

Ceremonial opening and Town welcome from Ruth Mooney, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, opens the program at 10:30 a.m. in front of the Library. Special guests include



COURTESY

Pictured are fourth grade BES artists, who drew their favorite historic places after a New Hampshire History Week talk by Town Historian Wallace Rhodes. Left to right are Adam Ribeiro, Lilly Vaughn, Emilie DeFrancesco, Tyler Flanagan and Nick Pucci. Their pictures, including the long-gone train station and saw mill, the Dover Bridge, Veterans Memorial and Belmont Mill will be on display at the Corner Meeting House and Library.

State Senator Andrew Hosmer and State Representative Mike Sylvia. From 11 a.m. until

1 p.m., both outdoor and indoor choices abound.

"Everyone should take a little time to come

see what's old, restored and new here in the center of our town," said Eileen Gilbert, Library Director. The Library, open for regular hours from 9 a.m. will display exhibits, while nearby the Bandstand, Tioiga River Pavilion and a newly sited covered bridge spanning the Tioiga River, will have volunteers on hand. The Corner Meeting House will serve as both refreshment and learning center, featuring displays from the Belmont Historical Society, BRATT/Winni Trail, Friends of the Library, Friends of the Bandstand and Save the Gale School Committee. Five experts will speak beginning at 11:15 a.m. with tips on research and resources, as well as sagas of special Belmont places - the Mill and Gale School.

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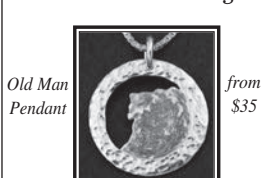
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