

Paddle for the Planet

This morning we are blessed to welcome a small group of senior high travelers from the Scattergood Friends School in Scattergood, Iowa. One month ago, this group launched their canoes at Lake Itasca and began their solar and human powered journey down the Mississippi River in order to study and reveal the connections between themselves, the river, and the planet.

Paddle for the Planet is about creating a vision for America. The greatest river system in North America is the ecological canvas providing us the opportunity for research, exploration, teaching, and embracing a new perspective and vision, one that helps this generation find solutions to the real problems along the Mississippi and across our nation.

Paddle for the Planet has experienced Minnesota's Mighty Mississippi with all of its beauty, challenges, dangers, and lessons and they are reaching out with open hearts and open minds to share their journey with us.

Each student on the trip is studying a particular part of the Mississippi River ecology; renewable energy, fish, plant life, dead zones, and the influences of seasonal climate changes on plant and animal life.

The group has set forth four goals for their trip.

- 1) Build Community along the river banks celebrating each other, the river, and the planet.
- 2) Conduct research on water quality and watershed issues along the full length of the river.
- 3) Educate ourselves, the community, and the planet about our connections between the river, energy and agriculture.
- 4) Fundraise for non-profit organizations working on energy and agricultural issues.

The entire Valley Community is encouraged to join them after the picnic to hear more about what they have done and will do with all of the information and experiences they collected on their trip.

Greetings,

Hot water mixed with brown sugar has never tasted this good. Hello from the canoe trip! We are 175 miles into our 550+ mile journey down the Mississippi river. At 600 paddle strokes a mile, that's over 105,000 paddle strokes per person.

This is our first encounter with society since leaving Scattergood on April 24th. Since then we have spent 8 days on the river, paddling through rapids, swamp, culverts, swamp, lakes, swamp, forest, swamp, and swamp. The weather forecast has remained grim since day 2. Northern Minnesota took us back in time, to the early spring (winter). The scenery became less and less colorful, the temperature dropped, and the clouds obscured the sun; harbingers of the thousands of gallons of ice cold water that would fall onto us from the sky above. This caused loss of mind, mild hypothermia, butter cravings, meat cravings from the oddest of people (Sophia), oddly colored skin, and general lack of positive mental thoughts. The constant downpour even occasionally got to the most positive of us (Colby).

The wildlife has been exquisite. Sometimes, so exquisite that we get distracted from our goal, and go on 3 mile lake crossings with headwinds, only to find we made a wrong turn. Thanks-a-lot pelicans. Some of the critters we have seen include; eagles, mink, pelicans, fish, ospreys, muskrats, various small birds, pine marten, and frogs.

Sitting in the Grand Rapids Library, we are preparing the first of our educational and fun presentations. It should be an experience, as we are already famous here in northern Minnesota. We have had various people hail from the riverbank, "are you the group from Scattergood?" and so, the 'voyageurs' bid you adieu, until next time!

Scattergood Friends School

Scattergood has provided students from around the world with a college preparatory education since 1890. Unique in our approach, we emphasize living in community and are devoted to fostering the growth of the whole person. Rooted in Quakerism, the core values of simplicity, harmony, integrity, responsibility, and equality play out in everyday life. Students and staff alike endeavor daily to apply and integrate these Quaker values into the various school activities that occupy us from dawn to dusk. We hope that students come away with a deeper love of knowledge and a better understanding of themselves.