

Pine Mountain school stresses stewardship of land to visitors

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all do that, but they can have good and evil laid before them and they can choose what they will," Creech wrote two years later.

"I have deeded my land to the Pine Mountain Settlement School to be used for school purposes as long as the Constitution of the United States stands. Hopin' it may make a bright and intelligent people after I'm dead and gone."

Ever since, those words have guided the school like a beacon piercing the blackness.

In the earliest days, Pine Mountain was a boarding school, partly because of the area's lack of roads and partly because the school wanted to educate its students in such non-book-related pursuits as farming.

But in addition to teaching children, the school also provided the area's only medical services; assisted other schools through a circuit-riding staff member on horseback; and served as a community center for a variety of other activities.

In 1949, Pine Mountain became part of the Harlan County school system as a consolidated public school, which it remained until 1972 when it was supplanted by a new elementary school at nearby Bledsoe.

For the last 13 years, the settlement school has had a two-pronged focus: environmental education, and community programs and instruction in such areas as training for mothers and preschool children; exercise and fitness; cooking; automotive repair; GED and literacy; and music and dance.

Twice a month Carol Urquhart, who oversees the community programs, and another staff member visit area schools to teach art and dance. And this summer Mrs. Urquhart will go to Denmark with a community dance group.

She and her husband, James, director of the settlement school, moved to Pine Mountain from Michigan in July 1983 — bringing with them their numerous musical instruments and her cow.

The environmental-awareness program administered by the

school and taught by eight staff members serves more than 4,000 students annually. The cost of \$50 to \$75 per week per student includes room, board and tuition.

"The goal we teach is stewardship of the land," Urquhart said. "Almost all of our teaching is done outdoors, and the kids get hands-on experience. They go right into the stream or into the forest to investigate what's there."

"We try to help students gain an awareness of the environment around them and the relationship of man to the environment throughout history."

Instruction for Louisville Collegiate's eighth-graders and their introduction to Eastern Kentucky included a night hike; discussions about geology, coal preparation, native Americans, water and land; a visit to a nearby strip-mining operation; a campfire; quilting; and keeping daily journals on their activities and their impressions during the week.

"These are youngsters from very privileged backgrounds in terms of economics and education," said Betsy Settles, director of Louisville Collegiate's middle school and an eighth-grade science teacher.

"They will be people shaping policies, with input into corporations and government bodies, and I'm hopeful that's where the big influence will come."

"But if it (the visit to Pine Mountain) does no more than make them sensitive to beauty and how quickly environmental systems can be destroyed, it will be valuable."

This was Ms. Settles' fifth visit to Pine Mountain, and she characterized the experience as "fantastic" — not only from the standpoint of environmental awareness but also as an opportunity for the students to learn something about themselves and the region.

"It has been a real culture shock for this group," she said. "There has been a progression from 'What am I gonna do without my hair dryer?' to 'I didn't think I could get up that mountain but I did' to

observing that some people here don't have a lot of material possessions but seem to get along well."

"Some of the kids can't wait to get home and back to the luxuries of the city, and others will leave with a tremendous sense of regret. But all of the youngsters I've brought here have regarded it as a tremendous experience."

Students were not allowed to bring stereos, radios, electronic games, gum, food or candy to Pine Mountain, and some complained about such "deprivation" and expressed longings for the telephone, a McDonald's hamburger or elimination of the 10 p.m. curfew.

"But the restrictions aren't all bad; you just have to adjust," said Chip Ridge. "It breeds discipline."

Classmate Alex Lastovich was impressed by a "waste chart" posted in the dining hall. All food discarded by the students after meals was weighed by the staff and the amount of waste was recorded along with such comments as "terrible" and "horrible" if it exceeded three or four pounds.

Jessica Levin liked "getting dirty," and being able to wear blue jeans instead of the school uniforms that are required back home.

In addition to the summit hike, students were exposed to other new activities that included making wooden shingles and a patchwork quilt.

They also became acquainted with some new concepts and new terminology.

During one class, the students were asked to consider what the planet would be like if there had been no water on it since the beginning of time.

When one girl suggested that there would be no "dirt," instructor Karoun Miller replied gently:

"We usually call it 'soil.' Dirt's something you sweep up off the floor."

Urquhart said he would like to involve more Eastern Kentucky students in the environmental-awareness program but that local school districts have difficulty coming up with even the modest fees charged.

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Staff Photo by Bill Kight

Students from Louisville Collegiate School trudged up the hill at Pine Mountain Settlement School to West Wind, the dormitory

where they were housed while attending the school's four-day environmental-awareness program. (More pictures, Page, B 1.)

Pine Mountain: A unique learning experience

By R. G. DUNLOP

Courier-Journal Staff Writer

"Everything is so pure and untouched and it is nice for a change. . . . This trip is turning out to be fun (although I'm dying for a pizza and a Coke)."

"Along the way we saw many things, including . . . old houses where people had to wash their clothes outside and had torn-up yards."

"Well I'm glad I climbed Pine Mountain. I never thought I could. Well I did! (Hope I never have to do it again though.)"

— From the journals of eighth-grade students at the Louisville Collegiate School

PINE MOUNTAIN, Ky. — East End met Eastern Kentucky last week for a close encounter of the bird kind.

The encounter included more than just birds, actually — beasts, fish, air, water, land, people and everything else that is part of, or has an impact upon, the earth's environment.

By all accounts, the four-day meeting of these relative aliens from East and Eastern was a resounding success.

The Pine Mountain Settlement

School did its job, which was to provide instruction about the environment and about the culture and cultural history of Eastern Kentucky.

And 33 eighth-graders from the Louisville Collegiate School left Harlan County Friday morning with an enhanced sense of environmental awareness and with at least some passing knowledge of a region to which few of them had ever before been exposed.

"I think it's beautiful. The dialect may be different, but you get used to it," said 13-year-old Mark Metzner, who proudly sported a

button proclaiming that he had "survived" the Pine Mountain summit hike.

"I don't really think of the people as different. We're all Kentuckians."

Those words undoubtedly would have brought a smile to the face of Uncle William Creech, who gave 700 acres of land on the north slope of Pine Mountain for the settlement school's founding by Katherine Pettit in 1913.

"I want all youngsters to serve the livin' God. Of course they won't

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