

# Kids get glimpse of nature during Raceway Woods tour

6.8.95  
DAILY  
HERALD

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Daily Herald Correspondent

Some of the kids who participate in the Morningside Youth Center in Carpentersville had never seen a tadpole or the hoof print of a deer before Wednesday.

A trip to Raceway Woods, sponsored by the Dundee Township Park District, turned out to be a first-hand lesson about ecology and wildlife.

Nine youngsters, ages 9 to 12, along with three park district employees, spent about two hours hiking through and exploring the

woodland area along Route 31.

Group leader Annie O'Leary led the way along the old paved race track, pointing out animal footprints and unusual plant life. New to the park district, O'Leary will devote time this summer exclusively to Raceway Woods.

"My focus is to build up nature and environmental programming here," she said.

O'Leary explained the diversity of the area, pointing out regions damaged by vehicles and vandals. Huge ruts left by recreational vehicles were filled with rain water, and parts of the old cracked pave-

ment, once used as an official race-track, were littered with broken glass, rusted auto parts and beer cans.

The children gathered around a large puddle filled with tadpoles.

"They're all growing now," shouted 9-year-old Edgar Suarez.

As they examined nearby raccoon tracks, they shouted the names of animals they hoped to see along the way.

"I want to see snakes and bunny rabbits," said 11-year-old Iris Vega. Along with friends Mary Bueno and

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**Annie O'Leary hikes through Raceway Woods along Route 31 while teaching kids from the Morningside Youth Center about nature and ecology.**

Daily Herald Photo/Dave Tonge

# NATURE: Park district program puts focus on youth activities

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Alma Escontrias, this was Vega's first experience out of her Carpentersville neighborhood.

"I think maybe I will come back in the future," the 10-year-old also said.

The trek through Raceway Woods is just one of several field trips planned for the Morningside Center this summer.

"We're going to try to take the kids roller skating and out to

the petting zoo at Randall Oaks (park)," said Rob Huerta.

The center, which opened in April, is part of the Dundee Township Park District's Operation Outreach Program in Carpentersville. Located north of Route 25 and Route 68 on Wakefield Drive, the facility provides games, sports and other activities for third-through sixth-graders in the Carpentersville area.

For membership information, call the park district at 428-7131.

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