

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photo Caption: A montage of photos from the 2019 Becket Chimney Corners overnight.

Chester 5th graders hail overnight in Becket

Huntington – Over the last 3 years, the spring overnight at Becket Chimney Corners has become a rite of passage for the oldest grade at Chester Elementary School. Thanks to a grant from the Gateway Education Foundation, students were again able to spend a couple of days together in the great outdoors, doing STEM activities, and sharing memories before moving onto Middle School.

Under the direction of 5th grade teacher Kristen Baker, students arrived at 8 a.m. for a shared breakfast followed by two full days of activities that included canoeing, indoor climbing wall, leadership training, archery, low ropes, outdoor living skills, and a final STEM project involving raw spaghetti and marshmallows. And, of course, it would not be a full experience without a campfire and s'mores!

Student Isabella Gonzalez said, "Becket Chimney Corners is such a good place just to put your phones down for once and enjoy times with your friends and nature."

Nearly half of the 17 students attending reported that it had been their first time canoeing, with many adding that it was their favorite part of the trip. Jack Rahilly said, "When we went canoeing, I soaked Xavier and he was kinda really mad."

For others, the trip marked their first time doing archery and indoor rock climbing, which some found a little scary. "Our field trip was fantastic. The instructors pushed us to our limits and had us try our hardest at everything we do," said Jocelyn Dowd. "I appreciated them boosting our confidence and to try new things. I loved our field trip!"

Whether the students were aware of this or not, the trip also emphasized learning about ecosystems and protecting environmental resources. And for Baker, it was about having them gain personal responsibility and leadership skills as they move onto a bigger school and bigger world in Middle School.

Baker secured an \$800 grant from the Gateway Education Foundation to help pay for the trip. Costs were further reduced by having parents help transport students to and from the site. Since 2012, the Gateway Education Foundation has raised and disbursed over \$97,000 to Gateway students, classrooms and schools.

"This trip has become a much anticipated yearly field trip and rite of passage for our fifth graders," Baker said.

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