

Kraxberger kids help create butterfly hill

Pollinators like butterflies and bees are at risk due to habitat loss, urban development, and overuse of pesticides. That's why Karen Zerzan's sixth grade class from Kraxberger Middle School is helping to create a butterfly/pollinator hill at Gladstone Nature Park, located two blocks from their school.

"Students come for half an hour each week. We planted some milkweed last week and did some sheet-mulching to create a bed for plants," said FOGNAP leader Nancy Eichsteadt. "On their next visit they plan to make a video and install leaf molds they made in a previous class."

Supported by a Metro Nature in Neighborhoods grant, the project is led by Friends of Gladstone Nature Park [FOGNAP], a local non-profit. Other partners in the effort include the City of Gladstone, Gladstone Schools, Exceed Enterprises, the Audubon Society, and Bosky Dell Native Plants.

PHOTO: Sixth graders from Karen Zerzan's class sheet mulch a planting bed, part of a project to support pollinators at the Gladstone Nature Park.

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Sensory path helps students refocus

John Wetten Elementary is trying a new strategy to help students refocus on learning. Thanks to a \$1,500 grant from the Gladstone Education Foundation, fifth grade teacher Kaitlyn Gillies created an indoor sensory path.

The bright-colored, space-themed path takes children through a series of movements designed to regulate the child's energy. Specialists in autism, physical therapy, and occupational therapy developed the path as a calming strategy for students dealing with autism, attention deficit disorder, or sensory processing issues.

"You can use the sensory path to relax if you're getting hyper," said fifth grader Haven Flett. Her classmate Zach Bennett agreed it's a good way to release energy.

"Giving kids the opportunity to move provides a re-set that allows the student to refocus on classroom learning," said Gillies.

After students are trained to use the sensory path, the resource will be available throughout the school day to any student who needs it.

PHOTO: Fifth grade student Haven Flett helped demonstrate use of the sensory path in a video that will be shared with students at John Wetten Elementary.

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Hats Not Hate project benefits Gladstone kids

Gladstone parent Lindsay Anderson wanted to do something to fight bullying. That's why she and several friends joined forces to knit 30 blue hats, enough for each student in her son Thomas's third grade class at John Wetten Elementary.

The Hats Not Hate project is a national “craftivist” movement launched in 2018 to remind students of their important role in standing up to support each other. The blue color of the hats represents awareness, peace, and solidarity.

“Her efforts touched the hearts of my students and led to some great discussion about how bullying happens and how we can stand up for and support one another when we see bullying behavior,” said third grade teacher Patti Banka. “Lindsay shared with me that she has big plans. Next year, she hopes to be able to give hats to the whole school!”

PHOTO: Mrs. Banka’s third grade students show off the new hats they received through the Hats Not Hate anti-bullying project.

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