

## June 2018: *Stacey Clementz*



**Background:** I would like to introduce Stacey Clementz who has worked for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District and is the Education Program Specialist at Homer Lake Interpretive Center. She and I have served together on the Environmental Education Association of Illinois Board of Directors for the the past several years. Please help me welcome her. - Kirsten

**TPNC:** Can you tell us a little about what you do?

**Clementz:** I am in charge of the environmental school programs and well as the nature summer camps. We see around 4,500 kids between the ages of 3 years to 16 years old in a year just for our environmental programs. I also conduct teacher workshops throughout east central Illinois.

**TPNC:** What influenced you to choose this career?

**Clementz:** I have always wanted to be a teacher since I was little. I have also always loved nature. I didn't realize that I could put two of my favorite things together until I did an internship at Anita Purves Nature Center. It was love at first sight!



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**TPNC:** What do you like most about your career?

**Clementz:** I love that I am continually learning and growing each day. I learn new teaching strategies and skills. I also learn about myself, not only as an educator but as a person. I am constantly learning new information about nature to pass on to my students.

**TPNC:** What do you find challenging about your career or environmental in general?

**Clementz:** The most challenging aspect of my job is to overcome the myths that people believe about the environment. It is unbelievable how many students come out to our preserves and believe that there are lions and tigers that live here.

**TPNC:** Can you describe a favorite environmental education moment?

**Clementz:** My favorite moments have been when training new environmental educators and seeing them come into their own. They see the light come on in their students eyes and realize they made that happen.



**TPNC:** Why do you feel environmental education is important?

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**Clementz:** Environmental education is a type of learning that involves discovering the environment around us, understanding the issues the environment faces and teaching the skillset to make responsible decisions where the environment is concerned. It is a truly immersive experience.

This education inspires a life-long passion for the environment which will lead

to an innate need to protect and conserve their surroundings. EE teaches learners to appreciate the environment and provides the resources needed to make informed decisions to tackle environmental issues.

**TPNC:** Who is your environmental hero and why?

**Clementz:** Wow, this is a hard question to answer. I don't think I have just one environmental hero. Honestly, I think the kids I see making a difference are my heroes. Teaching others, not just their peers but adults, why the environment is important and why we need to take care of it. It is these children that will be taking care of our planet now and into the future.



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**TPNC:** What is your favorite aspect of nature and why?

**Clementz:** *“Nature is man’s teacher. She unfolds her treasures to his search, unseals his eye, illumines his mind, and purifies his heart; an influence breathes from all the sights and sounds of her existence.”* – Alfred Billings Street

Alfred Billings Street, poet and author, had it correct in his quote above. Nature always has something to teach us, whether it is to slow down and enjoy the view, trust your instincts or that everything has a purpose.