What it means to be an Ocean Crusader

Ever passionate and committed founder, Ian Thomson from Ocean Crusaders, aimed to gather like-minded people for a morning of taking action cleaning up and learning about the significant history of beautiful St Helena Island.

The Indigenous term for this island was Noogoon and it was a site of feasting prior to being renamed St Helena Island with reference to Napoleon in 1927. This heritage-listed site was a quarantine station that became one of the most profitable prisons in Queensland’s history. The island housed prisoners and staff for 65 years from 1867 until 1932.

The Moreton Bay EEC team were proud to be part of this event. Fifty-three excited volunteers joined us on-board Inspiration, with more joining other vessels to total 172 volunteers for a day of making a difference.

This was an Ocean Crusader event generously funded by Energex. It was the final of the three islands clean up with the other two being Mud Island and Green Island.

Some of the results from the rubbish audit include 1350 plastic bottles, 971 pieces of polystyrene and 4620 pieces of hard plastic. Interestingly, only 33 plastic bags were collected off the island, showing fantastic results for the new plastic bag ban. The plastic bags found were quite old and had been degrading in the environment for some time.

Additionally, we enjoyed highlighting this amazing historical site with stories from the past with our 53 volunteers. They left the day having engaged in St Helena Stories as well as cleaning up difficult to reach shorelines.

We love our valuable partnerships at Moreton Bay EEC. These include Ian (Ocean Crusader guru) and his team, Energex (generous sponsor), Roland Dowling (incredible Ranger in Charge) and crew, Joan Pease (passionate baysider and MP Wynnum), volunteers and everyone else that joined the day.

The event was a timely reminder that it is best to REFUSE plastic before we even consider REDUCE, REUSE and RECYCLE. Together, we can all make a difference.

Article contributed by:
Di Aylward
Principal
Moreton Bay EEC
Bunyaville EEC farewelled our Principal, Noeleen Rowntree, on Sunday 9th June. Noeleen has taught at Bunyaville for 31 years and has been Principal for the past 14 years.

Thank you Noeleen for your years of dedication to the Department of Education.

You have touched the hearts and minds of 10's of 1,000's of students (as well as their teachers and parents). You have led by example to achieve the highest possible learning outcomes for the students that 'cross our path'.

You HAVE made a difference!

We have no doubt that your environmental advocacy will continue, just in a different direction...safe travels.

Article contributed by: Debbie Ledger
Acting Principal
Bunyaville EEC

SQEEC – Intentional Collaboration

This year teaching staff from Barambah, Columboola and Amaroo EECs were hosted by the Amaroo team over the Student Free Days.

The program for the two days consisted of:

- Principles & techniques used during Earthwalks,
- Presentations and professional discussions around Inclusion policy and procedures in our Centres,
- And of course, a look at the construction progress of Amaroo’s new building.

Despite a rather cloudy night we were also lucky enough to be given a tour of University of Southern Queensland’s Mount Kent Observatory. Their presentation of their work around ExoPlanet research and discovery was amazing.

On the final day, we were privileged to receive a guided tour of Gummingurru, a meeting and ceremony place for a number of different indigenous groups prior to continuing on to the Bunya Bunya Festival.

Article contributed by: Will McElroy
Teacher, Columboola EEC
The ‘new’ Tinaroo EEC – two years on...

Well it is almost two years since we took on the extra responsibilities of a second site - our ‘Barron River Campus’. There have been many challenges, but our staff have ‘stuck at it’, through ‘thick and thin’.

For this newsletter I thought I would focus on the facility itself and our most recent achievements. Although this campus has been in place for over forty years, it was somewhat run-down and required lots of love and attention. It also needed to be turned into a place of learning.

We have:

- Established orienteering and rogaine courses
- Installed sound absorption panels in the dining room
- Improved seating areas by installing replas benches
- Added signage by artist Robert Strachan
- Added games for student downtime
- Constructed a ‘bouldering wall’
- Reworked the extensive network of tracks through our bushland
- Added an educational mural in the classroom entitled “The Way We Live”.

Article contributed by:
Peter MacGregor
Principal,
Tinaroo EEC

Above: The new ‘bouldering wall’.
Below: Sound absorption panels in the dining room ceiling.

Above: Improved seating areas (replas benches)
Below left: Downtime games
Below middle: Reworking of the bushland tracks
Right: “The Way We Live” educational mural
Below right: Signage with artist Robert Strachan
Over the past 20 years students coming to Holloways Beach EEC (HBEEC) have been able to study what makes a healthy estuarine environment through monitoring data such as birds and Syclla serrata (mud crab) population numbers and conducting water testing.

Over the past 6 or 7 years, students noticed that the Syclla serrata population had rapidly declined and set about trying to find answers as to why. Although many reasons were proposed, evidence to support student theories was hard to obtain; especially as a number of hypothesis were based on aspects of water quality and the data we had was limited to dissolved oxygen, salinity, pH, temperature and turbidity.

In response to the students desire to have more data on our local Thomatis / Richter’s Creek waterway, HBEEC managed to connect with local water expert, Dr. Lynne Powell, who not only became the centre’s STEM Professionals in Schools partner but helped to secure funding from Cairns Regional Council to have samples tested in the council laboratory.

This gives us an even greater understanding of overall system health as students get to examine more complex aspects of water quality including ammonia, nitrogen, phosphates, chlorophyll and bacterial enterococci. In addition to this, biyearly sediment samples are taken and monitored.

Student groups who collect data are excited to engage in real scientific process and methodology. Results are attributed to them and will soon be published on the HBEEC website.

HBEEC have also become members of the Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership which connects farmers, council, environmental groups and other interested parties to collaborate in monitoring and improving the management of our Far Northern waterways.

HBEEC will also be conducting a STEM camp and extended waterways Grand Challenge later this year in conjunction with the Tropical North Learning Academy, which will see students publish their own version of a Healthy Waterways report card based on the Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Report Card. The student report card will be included on the Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership website: https://wettropicswaterways.org.au/wet-tropics-report-card/.

Hopefully this extended water testing program data, in addition to the work we already do educating students and teachers about the importance of our estuaries and mangroves, and our work with the Mangrove Watch program, and local indigenous rangers, will help to foster better and more informed relationships with our waterways in order to keep them healthy well into the future.

Article contributed by:

Terri Mulqueen
Teacher
Holloways Beach EEC
Columboola OEEC was once again alive to the sounds of “Oooooh”, “Aaaah” and “I didn’t know that!” when we held our annual Year 10 girls Science STEM camp May 7-9. Now in its third year, the camp is offered to all Year 10 girls in our Darling Downs South West Region and we were very happy to welcome 32 keen science participants with some of the schools, notably Cunnamulla, Mitchell and Jandowae represented for the first time.

Columboola OEEC began offering the camp to the region in 2017 with the aim of exposing Year 10 female students from rural and remote areas to a variety of hands on inquiry activities with STEM professionals as well as exploring opportunities within STEM fields and pathways into senior STEM subjects. As with previous camps, we were supported by our regional STEM Champion, Amanda Kilgour, as well as Robyn Bull and Natalie McKirdy, representatives of the Wonder of Science and University of Southern Queensland’s STEM Ambassador Programme. The presenters Dr Carolyn Brown, Sanaz Behtaj, Peta Zivec and Kaitlyn O’Mara, presented informative and exciting sessions covering topics as diverse as stars other than the sun and light spectra, chemical bonds, natural revegetation in agricultural areas after clearing and nutrient release in aquatic environments.

The visiting students enjoyed the STEM sessions if the feedback comments were anything to go on. From “Enjoyed learning about the variety of STEM related careers available” and “Seeing how women have succeeded in STEM was really inspiring” to “You should always use marshmallows to demonstrate chemical bonding!” It seemed there was something for everyone.

Article contributed by:
Robyn Cahill
Teacher
Columboola EEC

Over the course of 2019, Tallebudgera Outdoor & Environmental Education Centre –Currumbin Valley Campus have been the beneficiary of a City of Gold Coast Division 14 Grant that has supported the funding of Indigenous presenters to share cultural knowledge and traditional dance with the students visiting our centre.

This has been hugely successful as a culminating experience for the Year 4 students participating in our Connecting to Country residential program.

These sessions have been a shared experience for both the students and the Indigenous mentors allowing the students to not only grow in their awareness of Indigenous culture, but to also deepen their own connection with country with an experience that is lived through the body.

Our sincere thanks to the City of Gold Coast and our jimbelung (friends) at Dreamworld Corroboree for supporting this initiative.

Article contributed by:
Bryce Roberts
Teacher,
Currumbin Valley Campus
Tallebudgera OEEC
Orienteering in the Bush

On the 19th of March, Columboola EEC hosted the Miles and District orienteering trials. Students from Taroom, Wandoan, Drillham and Miles district attended this event thanks to their dedicated parents.

After a much-needed sprinkle of water the day prior to the event, the School Yard course and the Stockwhip Creek course provided a great challenge for the participants. Students navigated the slippery conditions and armed with their map and compass skills, all participants were able to complete a course and have been invited to the regional trials.

The very exciting thing about these trials is that it is the first time in 30 years they have been offered. It is great to have them back on the representative sports calendar. The re-introduction of this event is the result of our partnership with Felicity (Range Runners Orienteering) and our surrounding schools through the development of a number of courses through our district, organising coaching training for teachers and offering weekend events for the general community.

We are looking forward to the regional South West trials which will also be held at Columboola next month.

Remaining Outdoor Recreation Courses for 2019

Canoe Flatwater Guide Skillset (SISSS00018)

Includes:

- Online Resources and Activities
- 3-day Training Weekend: 13 – 15 September
- At Home Assignments
- 2-day Overnight Assessment Weekend: 9 – 10 November

Fee: $1200
(Discounts offered to OEEC staff and Duke of Edinburgh Adventurous Journey Supervisors)

If you would like to enrol please go to: https://tallebudgeratrainingservices.com.au/canoekayak-guide-course/

Look for Conference 2019 reports and photos in the Term 3 OEEC Sector Newsletter