

Lena Whitmore Students Abuzz Over Bees

Bee hive outside classroom window intended to get fourth-graders excited about science

By Hadley Rush, Daily News staff writer

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Photos: Geoff Crimmins/Daily News



Bailee Gropp didn't know how important queen bees were before she began studying them two weeks ago.

"The other bees circle around the queen because they worship her," said Gropp, 10. "And they feed her and clean her."

Gropp's fourth-grade class at Lena Whitmore Elementary School in Moscow has a live beehive attached to the window in its classroom. The hive was built by University of Idaho geology graduate student and beekeeper Peter Oswald.

"I built (a hive) for my house and modified it to fit the window here," Oswald said. "The kids love it."

Oswald is part of the GK-12 Project, which pairs UI graduate students with elementary school students in a program called Scientists and Teachers Educating and Preparing Students.

"I did the program last year in Lapwai," Oswald said. "Now I come to Lena Whitmore three days a week."

Kacie Robbins said her favorite thing about studying bees has been learning about honey production.

"I actually didn't know they were supposed to have exact hexagons for their combs," she said. "I really like looking at the live bees and seeing them go in and out of the hive."

Robbins said now that she's seen how the bees make honey, she's not sure she wants to eat it ever again.

"At least not for a long time," she said.

Paul Allan, coordinator for the GK-12 project, said the program allows 10 graduate students to teach in Moscow, Potlatch, Genesee, Juliaetta, Troy and Lapwai through a grant from the National Science Foundation.

"The goal is for the classroom teacher to glean more content from the expert who comes in," Allan said. "And the students benefit immensely. They just love it. They're wowed."

McKenzie Carscallen said she likes learning about bees because she's always been interested in anything that deals with animals.

"I want to be a vet when I grow up," Carscallen said, adding that although she thinks bees are fascinating, she probably won't end up working with them.

"I've been stung too many times," she said. "I sat on a bee once."

Michael Krewer said he thinks male bees, known as drones, have it made.

"The males do not work," Krewer said. "If I was a drone, I'd sit and watch football, drinking my honey."

Terrence Geffre said he doesn't necessarily like learning about bees.

"It's just kind of creepy to be studying this," he said, inspecting a dead bee through a magnifying glass. "I don't want to be a scientist."

Gropp said aside from learning how important the queen bee is, she was surprised by a few other facts.

"Did you know that bees' blood is white?" she asked. "Or that you can't see their stingers because they suck them into their abdomen?"

Oswald said the students' reaction makes him enjoy what he does.

"I love it," he said. "These kids are extremely enthusiastic about science. If you can get them excited about science, it's a huge motivator.

"I've never seen anyone so engaged in anything."

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