



by Tucker Riddle

Biking. Hiking. Fishing. Camping. That's what my childhood consisted of, and it changed my life. It's hard for me to think that some people have never woken up at 4:00 a.m. to go fishing, or have never spent the night in the middle of the woods without cell service. Everyone should experience that. Once someone gets to high school or later in life, they become less likely to try new things, which is why it's important to teach kids about the outdoors at a young age. Schools in Lexington School District One are starting to get a hold of this idea, with courses like Outdoor Education, Marine Science and Environmental Science. I remember going on a field trip in the eighth grade with my Outdoor Education class. It was an overnight backpacking trip, and I was one of the only kids who had ever been camping before. Nature has a way of getting us all; it helps us relax and get away from the noise of the modern world.



Kids need to experience this, but why? Why do the outdoors matter so much? And why do I care about people getting involved with nature? Should you?

Conservation is an issue that affects everyone, but if someone has never experienced the greatness of the outdoors, then why would she try to save them, protect them and love them? If society doesn't have a reason to care about something, it won't. Without people who care about nature, nature will be overtaken by industry and development and we will have no natural places left. However, if we teach more about conservation, sustainability and nature, and get kids to go outdoors more, they will develop a love, maybe even an obsession, with the outdoors. Then when they grow up, they will want to do everything in their power to save the outdoors. I love being outside and experiencing what the natural world has to offer, but if people don't protect it, there will be nothing to enjoy. That's why I care about this.

Nature matters to me, it impacted my life for the better, and I believe it should be like that for everyone, forever. It's like, if you love this one little restaurant, and it's your favorite place in the world to go eat. But one day, they close it down because you were the only one who ate there. If you had just told your friends about it then maybe the restaurant would have had enough business. It's the same with nature and conservation. If no one protects it, it will just fade out, which we don't want. This is why schools need to get involved, because kids don't always have outdoorsy parents, someone to take them, or a Bass Fishing Club at school, like River Bluff High School and most colleges. Someone has to be there to help kids get involved. Can you be that someone to volunteer your time, take a kid hunting, fishing or for a walk in nature? A kid might be fascinated by the outdoors, but if no one takes that kid, he won't be prepared to experience it and save it later in life. Schools are supposed to prepare students for the world, and sometimes, that means saving it.

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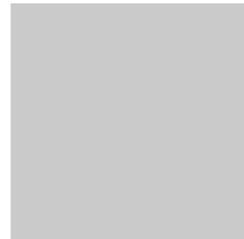
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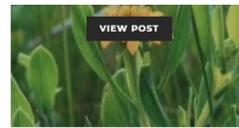
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