



Mt. Ararat High School
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November 1, 2008

RE: Cathance River Education Alliance

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is intended to serve as a letter of support for the Cathance River Education Alliance (CREA). I have used the Ecology Center and the surrounding property at the Preserve for the last three years. I have been able to count on the Preserve as an extension of my classroom to give students unparalleled access to the natural world. This has proven to be a vital part of the goals I have set for these students. They are able to demonstrate their knowledge of the natural world by visiting the center.

I have been the Envirothon advisor for Mt. Ararat High School for 5 years and I have seen a marked difference in the performance of my students over the past 3 years and I credit access to the Preserve for part of that. I have also been fortunate enough to visit the Ecology Center and the Preserve weekly since the start of this school year with my Advanced Placement Environmental Science students. We have conducted various laboratories on water quality, forestry, wildflowers, insect diversity, solar collecting, and benthic invertebrate studies. Having access to CREA is invaluable and the support that Rick and Cheryl provide is something that allows me to provide a top quality educational experience for my students on a shrinking high school budget.

As a result of the exposure to CREA I have had several students participate in summer programs at CREA, take on independent science fair projects, and pursue post-secondary training in the natural sciences. In an educational context CREA is effectively acting as a seeding program for young minds in the community. The fruits of this work will be evident as these students become adults and contributing members of the community.

I cannot thank those who are involved with CREA enough, the possibilities that are created by this organization has made a real difference for the students I teach and is creating a real difference in the culture of the area that will be evident for years to come. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me at 207/729-2951 or by e-mail (cooneym@link75.org).

Sincerely,



W. Michael Cooney
Chemistry & Environmental Science
Envirothon Advisor