

A Summer Recap from the Center for Civic Impact

By Jackie Wright, Museum Engagement Manager

Summers at Morven Park provide a change of pace for the Center for Civic Impact staff, who transition from facilitating programs throughout Loudoun County during a jam-packed academic year, to a season of preparation, professional development and specialized leadership programming for local students. The staff transitioned to maintain extended museum hours for our usual increase in visitation during the summer months. By no means have we just quietly waited for school to start back up in Loudoun County, although now that it is here, we couldn't be more excited! Here is a snapshot of what we have been up to, and why we continue to see the value of incredibly relevant and meaningful learning experiences that young people have with us.

Morven Park's Center for Civic Impact works very closely with Loudoun County Public School (LCPS) staff and students to provide hands-on, project-based learning experiences for students in K-12th grade throughout the county. One important step in ensuring that our education team is equipped to 'talk the talk' of project-based learning and help local teachers complete "One to the World" projects is making sure we participate in trainings to support teachers in meeting their requirements. These projects, designed by teachers, connect students to real-world, authentic problems that they can have a hand in solving. This is exactly what all our programs aim to do by giving students the voice and the choice to help their community. One more team member, Education Programs Coordinator Alecia Bryner, attended the Project Based Learning workshop this summer sponsored by LCPS and the Buck Institute for Education.

Meanwhile, we hosted two additional trainings for local teachers to expand their knowledge about Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) topics. We enjoyed hosting Richmond-based Agriculture in the Classroom, a workshop for elementary school educators interested in incorporating agriculture and gardening into their curriculum. With our deep agricultural legacy at Morven Park, this has been a wonderful partnership over the years. We also worked with the LCPS Science Department to bring a large and diverse group of educators together for a two-day workshop with the Monarch Teacher Network based out of New Jersey. This training, hosted in Loudoun County annually for nearly 10 years, got us excited about sharing our monarch gardens and elementary school offerings with this group. The education team continues to do our part to help the monarchs by raising and releasing butterflies into the wild- contact us if you'd like to help or learn more!

An important component of our work in the summer months revolves around two leadership opportunities for young people in our region. Selected middle school students participated in a three-day Youth Leadership Retreat, held July 25-27, where

they were challenged to consider their own leadership style, and how that might affect their ability to contribute to solving problems in a group setting. Our new Director of Education, Gwyneth MacMurtrie and I coached the students through teamwork activities and games to explore the skills needed to tackle tough issues facing their community. We realized, given our challenging world of fast-paced news, extreme opinions, and division modeled by most adults on TV, that our participants needed a platform to research, form their own opinion on a topic, and consider thoughtful and effective means towards an actionable solution. Believe me, when we as adults have trouble finding and understanding credible, unbiased sources to help us learn more about a problem like bullying, food waste, or teen stress, it is even MORE challenging for young learners to dig out the truth! We feel that this retreat was just the beginning in these students' journey towards being active participants in our democracy.

A Youth Leadership Institute for high school students, in partnership with staff at Loudoun County Parks and Recreation and Community Services, took place August 8-10 at Morven Park. Through simulations, games and improv activities, we encouraged our participants to develop a wider, more global perspective, one that helped to inform their thinking and opinions surrounding problems that they wanted to solve. The students considered their problem, their passion for solving the problem, and their message to community members during the culminating activity, creating a Public Service Announcement. We invited local community leaders to view the PSA's and provide thoughtful feedback to the students. The three days flew by, and we felt honored to empower these young people in their quest for the truth, and their willingness to lead the charge towards a positive tomorrow.

Can you tell we love what we do?!!

With the fall program season now underway, please check back to see how the [Center for Civic Impact](#) is impacting the lives of local youth and educators!