2023 Creative Arts Fellowship

Ten individuals from seven different colleges and universities will spend five weeks at the Institute this summer as part of the 2023 Creative Arts Fellowship. A primary goal of the program is to foster a creative community. The experience is an opportunity for fellows to learn about and interact with the natural world and learn from other students in the sciences, natural resources, and other artists and writers. Fellows don’t propose specific work ahead of time; instead, they are given the opportunity and encouragement to be inspired by what they are learning and experiencing while onsite and develop work from those experiences.

To help fellows get the most out of the fellowship, the Institute provides a mentor for both the writers and the creative artists to offer advice on both technique and professionalism and encourage the fellows to advance their skills. This year Matthew Schenk of Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) and Benjamin Naka-Hasebe Kingsley of Kalamazoo College will serve as the art and writing mentors respectively.

The writers for 2023 include Kristen Brennan and Sara Daniels from Central Michigan University, Kipp DeMan from Calvin University, Desirée Garcia from Western Michigan University (WMU), and Kenzi Hesselink from GRCC. While they share a common interest in poetry, several of the writers are also interested in short stories.

Creative artists include Sophia Forystek and Zoe Meyering from Kendall College, Emily Graves of Valparaiso University, Kaitlin Riley of GRCC, and Nalani Walits of Grand Valley State University. Many of the artists are primarily interested in painting, though illustration, drawing, and mixed media are other interests.

Not everything is just work for the fellows. There is also time for fun and fellowship. The fellows will be living in Hyla House with time to join researchers in fieldwork, participate in social activities on and offsite, help out with educational and stewardship activities at the Institute, and just enjoy the quiet of the natural environment here. To meet the fellows and see and hear the outcomes of their work, be sure to attend the Field Station Summer Celebration on August 3; see the outside flap of this flyer for details.

Year Two of the Barry County Water Quality Monitoring Program is Underway!

As the Barry County Water Quality Monitoring Program enters its second year in the summer of 2023, Institute staff and student researchers have been working throughout the year to meet the program’s three main goals:

- Collect high-quality data about the status of water quality in Barry County;
- Produce educational materials in a range of media forms about water quality to share with lake residents, lake associations, and community residents of Barry County; and
- Increase awareness of the importance of water quality and what each resident can do to protect and improve it.

This summer research will be conducted by Field Station Manager Matthew Dykstra, Morgan Morin, a recent graduate from WMU’s biological sciences Master’s degree program, and Sarah Mominee, an undergraduate biology student at WMU. Morgan is hoping to learn more about how environmental organizations operate and gain experience working on a team and communicating information to multiple stakeholder groups. Sarah is using this experience to help her be better prepared for graduate school in the future.

This research team will monitor water quality in 12 lakes and conduct stream sampling in Cedar Creek, Podunk Creek, and Tyden Creek. In the process, they will collect many different kinds of data, including dissolved oxygen, temperature, E. coli levels, aquatic plant species composition, and nutrient levels, to help us better understand the health and functionality of these different bodies of water. Morgan and Sarah will share this year’s research findings at the Field Station Summer Celebration on August 3; see the outside flap of this flyer for details.

To achieve the BCWQMP’s educational goals, the education department staff has developed several programs, including a field trip at the Institute for K-12 students to increase their awareness about water quality; a field trip to the Thornapple River to investigate what is in the river and to learn about the watershed; a lesson on designing tools for removing plastic and metal pollution from local lakes and rivers; a lesson on erosion and how to protect soil to keep it out of waterways; and a book study about water quality for local teachers.

In addition to these school programs, the Institute has offered several community programs about water quality in 2023, including a Lunch and Learn about Cisco and grayling conservation projects, a Wild Rice Workshop to help folks learn how to restore wild rice in their lakes, streams, and wetlands, and a workshop to help aspiring land stewards learn to better manage natural areas.
Spending time outside has been scientifically proven to reduce stress, improve mental and emotional well-being, and enhance immunity to diseases, but these benefits don’t only extend to humans. Time on the trails also is valuable for our canine friends. Hiking can be both a great physical workout and a source of mental stimulation as new scents, sounds, and sights can awaken your dog’s instinctual abilities. Recent studies also have found that contact with “healthy” soil, soil unaffected by fertilizers and other chemicals, can improve your dog’s immune system and protect them from disease.

But before you venture out on the trails, please keep a few things in mind for good trail “pet-iquette” (pet etiquette), as well as the health and safety of your dog:

- Dogs can be prone to overheating, especially in the summer, so bring lots of water.
- If you’re going for a long hike, food and a first aid kit are also recommended.
- To protect them from insect-borne diseases, pre-treat your dog with heartworm, flea, and tick prevention medications and check for ticks both during and after your hike.
- Keeping your dog on a 6-foot leash has many benefits: it helps everyone stay on the trail, prevents erosion, minimizes damage to local flora, protects ongoing research projects, minimizes disruptions to the local wildlife, and prevents your dog from running off in the “thrill of the chase,” ensuring that both you and your dog finish your hike together safely.

In celebration of our four-legged friends, please join us for a howlin’ good time socializing and walking at the Dog Days of Summer Doggy Party on the Trails on Wednesday, August 2. For more information and to register, visit CedarCreekInstitute.org or call (269) 721-4190. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Community Program Manager Ellen Holste at eholste@cedarcreekinstitute.org.

Field Station Summer Celebration
Thursday, August 3 6:30 – 8 pm
The student researchers, artists, writers, Steeby Land Management Fellows, and BCWQMP Fellows have been hard at work at the Institute all summer. They will be sharing the results of that work at the Field Station Summer Celebration. During this event, participants will be able to interact with the students while they share their scientific posters, artwork, and written pieces. To register, visit CedarCreekInstitute.org or call (269)721-4190.
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