



## Putting the Finishing Touches on the Trail

by Sabrina Carlson

On October 26th, 2015 the students of Mr. Caslin's and Mr. Doerfler's classes from Kinsey School headed to the Elden Springs Road access point on Passage 32 (Elden Mountain) to put the finishing touches on work that had been started by two other groups before them.

Being one of the youngest classes we work with, many of these students had never before been entrusted with so much responsibility. They listened carefully to the instructions on safety, tool use and the need to keep their personal protective equipment on at all times. You could see how seriously they took their roles as trail workers, carefully carrying tools out to the sites and waiting to be shown how to proceed.

Under the excellent guidance of the US Forest Service and crews from Arizona Conservation Corps, the students learned firsthand about hydrology, gradient and gravity, erosion and engineering. The questions they asked and observations they made demonstrated their learning in a way that workbooks never could.



*Careful Dam Building*

Learning from the experience the previous week, we divided the students into groups to help manage the activity, be more productive, and prevent the students becoming too fatigued from the physical work. One group worked on invasive weed removal. Having just done a thorough weeding of the trail the week before I wasn't sure if we would find too many. But what I forgot was the incredible observational powers of the 11-year-old. Their sharp eyes and intense determination to locate even the smallest Dalmatian toadflax paid off in a pile of weed-filled trash bags by the end of the day.

Co-lead Richard May led a group in the ever popular micro trails lesson. Armed with knowledge about what kinds of considerations go into building a trail, the students laid out their own trail (built for teeny tiny people) in yarn along the substrate of their choosing.



*"I found one!"*

After they constructed their trails, they were invited to give tours to the other students. These students were quite imaginative in their detailed stories of points of interest along the trail and the kinds of accommodations that might be available to trail users. One exuberant group declared that a large roller coaster could be found at one place on their trail. Mr. May asked them why they made this choice. They explained that this, of course, was their plan to pay for the cost of the trail. Charge people to ride the coaster, raise money for the trail! When asked if they thought that people who enjoyed nature trails would be the same people who wanted to ride a roller coaster they declared "Of course! Everyone likes roller coasters!"

By the time the day was done, everyone had the tired satisfaction of a day well spent and an entirely new level of confidence in themselves and each other.



*Accomplished Young Trail Stewards*

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