Eating Greener at Wolf Ridge
by Dan Hnilicka, Wolf Ridge Naturalist

I inhale deeply as I enter the Dining Hall, breathing in new delicious smells. In my two years at Wolf Ridge, I usually find myself excited around meal times because of my passion for food. However, this year I have been even more thrilled to find out what the Dining Hall will be serving at its next meal. Wolf Ridge has added more local and fresh menu items this past school year as a result of suggestions from school evaluations and beliefs aligned with Wolf Ridge’s mission statement. These new items are environmentally conscious, promote healthier eating, and support our local economy.

Barret Stavseth, Wolf Ridge’s Food Service Director, shares his beliefs on Wolf Ridge’s local food choices, “In order to keep our grocery dollars spent locally, Wolf Ridge is sourcing as much of its food as possible from Minnesota along with Wisconsin and Iowa. The benefits include economics, sustainability, higher quality products and menu offerings as well as the peace of mind knowing we are contributing to and participating in a more locally based food sourcing.” Stavseth explains that for years, Wolf Ridge has been choosing to purchase milk, butter, ice cream, yogurt, breakfast sausage, wild rice and fresh eggs from Minnesota farms. Additionally, pork sausage patties, pork-hams, and roasts are bought from Iowa and Wisconsin. When the season permits, Wolf Ridge also purchases fresh vegetables from 9 different Minnesota farms. The most local venue this past autumn is fresh leafy greens and peppers from the onsite Wolf Ridge farm.

There are many environmental advantages to the food sourcing Stavseth makes. For example, Wolf Ridge is now choosing beef from Thousand Hills Cattle Company in Cannon Falls, MN. Thousand Hills cattle are free range, grass fed, and raised using humane sustainable farming practices. These practices do not spray synthetic pesticides or herbicides. Wolf Ridge is now getting its roast turkey breasts from Ferndale Market, a family farm also in Cannon Falls, MN, which raises their birds without antibiotics or additives. Further more, purchasing any foods from Minnesota or Midwestern states reduces the distance our food travels to get here, and therefore reduces carbon emissions.

Another area where Wolf Ridge’s food service has continued to improve this year is increasing homemade food options, which creates healthier meals. A major shift has been made reducing the amount of pre-processed food in favor of fresh homemade meals. Wolf Ridge is now sourcing fresh leafy greens and peppers from the onsite Wolf Ridge farm.

Wolf Ridge Farm Report
Learn about the progress at the farm..........6 & 7
A View From The Ridge
by Peter Smerud, Executive Director

“The high today will only reach -1°F, with a low expected tonight of -7°F. All schools in the area have been closed, and this is the acronym to remember if you’re considering a trip outdoors: COLD: C – Caution, O – Outside, don’t do. L – Life threatening. D – Deadly or dangerous.”

This was the description of the weather conditions for St. Louis, MO on January 6th. As Minnesotans we might laugh at the temperatures of late December and early January are temperatures so low that their home school public schools were closed statewide. He told us of not only his pride but also that of hundreds of his students, who five years ago, he brought to Wolf Ridge for a school camping trip. They are also available at special prices, in lots of 25 for school members and $18.95 for non-donor members, including shipping. By covering up appropriately you dismiss the impact of wind chill. Cold can be well managed simply by adjusting the acronym presented above. Try this one on. COLD: C – Clean clothes insulate more effectively than dirty. O – Don’t overheat; keep adjusting clothing so you don’t sweat. L – Layers are the way to dress. Loose layers trap insulating layers of air between them. Layering up or down to adjust to activity, D – Stay dry. Dry your boots or boot liners at night, avoid sweating or getting wet. Water draws heat from your skin many, many times faster than air or dry clothing.

Classes at Wolf Ridge start with instructors inspecting students for appropriate clothing, sending kids back to the dorms for missing pieces or supplying items for kids without. Discussions are conducted about actions for staying warm. Length of time outside is adjusted for the conditions. Throughout class teachers are continually checking in with students and chaperones. Wolf Ridge has been accompanying students outside in all kinds of weather for 42 years. Children that attend Wolf Ridge learn important life skills about preparedness for going outdoors safely, including dressing for cold weather conditions. We make choices every day. With the right choices we can assure we stay safe in the outdoors, learn, work and even have fun at -20°F. So as mother said, “Bundle up and go OUTSIDE.”

On one of these recent cold days when school was cancelled, we received a letter from a schoolteacher who annually brings children to Wolf Ridge and tells them of the importance of staying warm. Length of time outside is adjusted for the conditions. Throughout class teachers are continually checking in with students and chaperones. Wolf Ridge has been accompanying students outside in all kinds of weather for 42 years. Children that attend Wolf Ridge learn important life skills about preparedness for going outdoors safely, including dressing for cold weather conditions. We make choices every day. With the right choices we can assure we stay safe in the outdoors, learn, work and even have fun at -20°F. So as mother said, “Bundle up and go OUTSIDE.”

The 2015 Wolf Ridge calendar features the outstanding photography of Jim Brandenburg. Jim traveled the globe as a photographer for National Geographic magazine for several decades. His photography has won a multitude of awards including the “World Achievement Award” from the United Nations in recognition of using nature photography to raise public awareness for the environment. Brandenburg has published many bestsellers. Brandenburg’s work can be seen on his web page www.jimbrandenburg.com. Calendars are available for $14.00 for donor members and $18.95 for non-donor members, including shipping. They are also available at special prices, in lots of 25 for school fundraising and retail sale. Proceeds of all calendar sales directly support children attending Wolf Ridge school programs. Call Wolf Ridge at (218) 353-7414 for more information and to order.

The Ridge at (218) 353-7414 for more information and to order. Support children attending Wolf Ridge school programs. Call Wolf Ridge at (218) 353-7414 for more information and to order.

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Katie Gill
Gary Olson
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Kent Year
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Jenn Valach

“Is this the world where my mother would have me dress to stay warm? Is this the world where my mother would have me dress to stay warm?”

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of more homemade dishes. This reduces packaging as well as allowing the food service more control of the ingredients going into the food which in turn leads to more nutritious alternatives. Examples include our homemade whole-wheat breads, buns, and cakes. Another change is how our food service staff has chosen to roast many of their vegetables this year as opposed to steaming because roasting vegetables retains more of the flavor as well as the nutrients. This autumn, students were greeted with a delicious array of diced, seasoned sweet potatoes and beets, bursting with flavor.

At dinner time, students coming into the Dining Hall following afternoon class might enjoy a meal beginning with a homemade meal dressed with new homemade dressings including, Maple Dijon, French, Balsamic, and Raspberry Vinaigrette. After the salad, students would eat a number of local, fresh entrees depending on the night. They might enjoy Minnesota maple-glazed ham. Alternatively, they could experience buttermilk-brined oven fried Minnesota chicken with Minnesota wild rice pilaf. Other exciting dinner options include wild rice meatloaf, with Minnesota wild rice pilaf. Other exciting dinner options include wild rice meatloaf,termilk-brined oven fried Minnesota chicken with Minnesota wild rice pilaf. Another delicious meal experience for guests and to intentionally reduce its environmental impact and support local economies. Join us in eating greener.

Eating Greener continued from page 1

The Incredible Saw-whet Owl

by Tessa Olson, Wolf Ridge Naturalist

It’s after midnight and pitch black outside. It was the third round of checking the mist nets and I was pumped. I was handed several owls to carry back to the banding station. As the owls were untangled from the mist nets I couldn’t help but notice their faces. Each one struck me as unique, from shape to expression. It was remarkable. Experiencing an up close encounter with an owl is not an opportunity that many people find themselves presented with but for the past two years in autumn I was able to participate in a night of Saw-whet Owl (Aegolius acadicus) banding. These small creatures are fascinating and many mysteries are still being unraveled about them. Several interesting characteristics that these owls exhibit include their sounds, size and mysterious migration patterns.

All birds have a unique song or call. Some of these sounds are so memorable that they are ones that take advantage of all five senses, and our bodies, allowing us to never forget these sounds, size and mysterious migration patterns. As Wolf Ridge staff has known for years, some of the most powerful educational experiences are ones that take advantage of all five senses, including taste, touch, sight and sound. As an example of Change or wild rice in Ojibwe Heritage. Wolf Ridge is making choices about food to create delicious meal experiences for guests and to intentionally reduce its environmental impact and support local economies. Join us in eating greener.

Wolf Ridge Staff Update

Dan Hollika is a Second Year Mentor Naturalist at Wolf Ridge. He attended the U of M Twin Cities, majoring in Animal Science. While he’s not teaching, he enjoys skiing, birding, eating, and having unexpected meaningful conversations.

Adam Barnett (04) recently started a new job as a naturalist for the Three Rivers Park System. He works at the Ccoon Rapids Dam site. Courtney (Kilsdonk) Osenroth (08) is back in Wisconsin. She is the new Naturalist Coordinator at Gordon Bubolz Nature Center in Appleton, WI. Amy Behrens (09) is studying speech pathology at the U of IA. Julie Newcombe (09) is home in England working as a Tutor at the Field Studies Council at Juniper Hall in North Downs. Rita (Skolasinski) Farchmin is studying speech pathology at the U of IA. Amy Behrens (09) is home in England working as a Tutor at the Field Studies Council at Juniper Hall in North Downs. Rita (Skolasinski) Farchmin is studying speech pathology at the U of IA. Amy Behrens (09) is home in England working as a Tutor at the Field Studies Council at Juniper Hall in North Downs. Rita (Skolasinski) Farchmin is studying speech pathology at the U of IA. Amy Behrens (09) is home in England working as a Tutor at the Field Studies Council at Juniper Hall in North Downs. Rita (Skolasinski) Farchmin is studying speech pathology at the U of IA. Amy Behrens (09) is home in England working as a Tutor at the Field Studies Council at Juniper Hall in North Downs. Rita (Skolasinski) Farchmin is studying speech pathology at the U of IA.

Nature Notes

Tessa Olson is a Second Year Mentor Naturalist at Wolf Ridge. She graduated from the University of Minnesota Duluth two years ago, where she studied International Relations. Tessa loves exploring outside in the Minnesota northwoods. Challenging herself through adventures with others feeds her soul. Tessa loves skiing, canoeing, and harvesting wild edibles.
Farm Report  
by Max Melby, Wolf Ridge Naturalist

The life of a farmer, it’s not an easy life. Working seven days a week, there’s barley enough time to finish the work. I mean, grow, if a farmer doesn’t have enough helping hands, it might be utterly impossible to harvest the fall crop. I remember the first time I visited an organic farm. It was a maize of veggies. I’ll never forget the smells, the sights, the feelings… and the opportunity to try my hand at harvesting vegetables. It was a brrrrrrrrrrr experience, barn-nome. We are excited to bring this eggwecent opportunity to the hords of learners who visit Wolf Ridge.

Last summer the Wolf Ridge Organic Farm got underway. We had an adequate first season despite the weather delaying our start. Veggies grew into mid-November in the hoop house. Visiting students had the chance to harvest, process, and deliver some of the farm’s first crops to the Dining Hall. We had the chance to enjoy a salad garnished with peppers and tomatoes, which grew at the farm. Students were amazed that we could actually grow food at Wolf Ridge. Our current goal is to someday supply ALL the veggies eaten in our Dining Hall. Let me tell you how we are making this happen.

Last spring, we constructed a 30’ x 96’ high tunnel hoop house to get the growth started. There are many benefits to using a high tunnel hoop house to get the growth started. In the early spring, the plastic provides extra warmth and insulation during the nights so that crops can go into the ground earlier.

In addition to the hoop house, there is a processing building under construction. This is essential for preparing the vegetables for the Dining Hall or storage. A screened area is provided for the initial washing as well as a walk-in refrigerator for cooling the produce. This building can also serve as a classroom.

So let’s imagine that we harvest a head of broccoli. We wash and then store it in the fridge. From the Fridge, a staffer will take the broccoli into our certified kitchen where it is cut-up to be delivered to the Dining Hall or blanched and frozen for later meals.

At Wolf Ridge, we do everything we can to provide students with an outstanding experience. We build lasting memories and valuable learning experiences. Through a grant from the Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation we are now developing curriculum for the farm that supports our mission. We have a handful of ideas about what farm classes might look like. It will provide learners an opportunity to experience gardening basics and how an organic farm works in general. The curriculum will likely address the relationships between plants, their pollinators, and us humans. Seasonally, the students will be participating in starting seeds, planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, washing and processing and hopefully eventually year round EATING.

This summer Wolf Ridge is going to score a brick-oven at the farm site to aid with that eating. We have a relationship with the North House Folk School in Grand Marais, MN. They offer a brick-oven building class. Students who register for that class will learn how to build a brick oven by working on one together as a group. Their worksite for this year’s class? It’s the Wolf Ridge Organic Farm! When students of any sort visit the farm, they may be able to harvest their own vegetables to make a pizza in the brick oven and enjoy a fresh, locally sourced lunch.

After reviewing snow removal patterns and deciding on the final space for composting areas placement was determined for more hoop houses. As soon as the land thaws in the spring, farm and construction crews will begin digging out the footprints for two more 30’ x 96’ high tunnel hoop houses. A grant, this time from the IRBBR (Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board) makes this possible. We anticipate that three productive greenhouses will keep students, campers, and naturalists busy… and learning!

Wolf Ridge is a busy place. As soon as we finished a greenhouse, we started a processing building. As soon as that processing building was underway, we were able to commit to building two more greenhouses. The chatter among naturalists keeps growing. Many people do not have the opportunity to see where their food comes from. Sure, vegetables come from a farm, but what do vegetables look like at the farm? How does a farmer make sure that their crops are coming up? How do organic farmers maintain their crops with something to get rid of the bugs? Do fresh and locally grown veggies really taste better?

We are very excited to establish the Wolf Ridge Organic Farm, fostering new and tasty learning experiences. Come get your hands dirty and get the flavor of gardening!
My experience at St. John's led me to pursue my time spent teaching about maple syruping at Wolf Ridge with boundless enthusiasm. Each spring during maple syrup season, students who visit Wolf Ridge have a variety of opportunities to visit the sugar shack where they learn about the history and practice of making maple syrup. The Ojibwe Heritage class is one such opportunity. A visit to the sugar shack may look like this:

Students remove their snowshoes and take a seat on the snow-covered picnic tables just outside of the sugar shack while they're introduced to the evaporator, boiling steadily, wafting aromas of hot maple sap under their noses. The story of Ininiwak, the Man Tree, may be told, to share one idea of how the Ojibwe

came to know maple syruping. After putting their snowshoes back on, students learn how to correctly identify a Sugar Maple by its opposite branching and the presence of previous years’ tap holes. They then venture out into the sugar bush, armed with the tools to tap a tree. After choosing a tree, they take turns drilling a hole into the tree. They insert the spike and hang a sap-collection bucket from it. The group then chooses a name for their tapped Sugar Maple. Names range from Drippy Joe to Sugar Mama, though some are less specific to the sweet nature of the sap.

Back at the sugar shack, they are given their next task: collecting sap. Each team is assigned a tree to gather sap from to add to the collection barrels or to pour directly into the evaporator pan. Once exhausted from tromping through the snow collecting sap, students have a chance to see if they can taste the difference between real maple syrup and artificially flavored high fructose corn syrup. Even on the coldest days, students bare their fingers to receive a drop of syrup A and syrup B. Almost all of them can tell the difference, though they diverge in which they’d prefer on their pancakes. They leave class with sticky fingers and a sense of wonder about the history and tradition of tapping maple trees.

Every maple syrup season is different, and last year was no exception for Wolf Ridge. For sap to run best, a series of nights below freezing and days in the 40’s are desired. There were more than enough freezing nights and thawing days to allow approximately 240 gallons of sap to be collected, justifying firing up the evaporator for five separate boils, amounting to about 6 gallons of finished syrup. With clear cold nights and warm sunny days this spring, the sap will flow again, though the abundance of syrup experienced last year may be hard to beat.

My experience at St. John’s and at Wolf Ridge led me to explore other maple syruping operations around the state. I found that many commercial syrupers have transitioned into using lines of tubing for sap collection. The lines connect the tap holes in the trees to collection tanks for storing sap, eliminating the need for workers or volunteers to venture out into the sugar bush collecting sap by hand. Smaller operations, tapping just enough trees to supply a year’s worth of syrup for a family or two, seem to be the most inventive in their maple syruping practices. I’ve seen old juice bottles, ice cream buckets, and milk jugs used as sap buckets. The sap, collected on snowshoes, is carried back to evaporators made from any steel container imaginable, as long as you could get a fire under it. They were all successful in their experience of tapping the trees, collecting the sap, firing the evaporator and sharing a piece of their tradition with family and friends bringing joy into their lives.

If I’ve learned anything about maple syruping over the past few years it’s that everyone who participates has their own way of doing it. From Leader evaporators to old oil barrels and kitchen pans, it seems there’s no right “way” to make maple syrup. I’ve had maple syrup that was blacker than tar and thicker than molasses, boiled in a witch’s crock over an open fire. I’ve also had maple syrup cooked to a perfect 66.7% sugar content, with a golden transparency and delightfully clean flavor. I loved them both. With maple syrup, as with most things, the process is the most important part of the story. Sitting next to an evap-orator of any sort, toasting hand-split wood into the firebox, sipping tea made with hot sap and sharing the experience with others is what maple syruping is all about. And what you end up with, whether it be Grade A maple syrup or a charred pan, it’s priceless.
Upcoming Programs

Phenology Adventures with Jim Gilbert
Join well known Naturalist and Phenologist, Jim Gilbert on seasonal explorations of Wolf Ridge ELC via hiking, canoeing, skiing and snowshoeing. An experienced and enthusiastic storyteller, Jim will interpret the phenology of the plants and animals.

Phenology Adventures with Jim Gilbert
NEW

Road Scholar Intergenerational:
July 6-11, July 20-25, Aug 10-15: Starting at $579

Family Camp:
July 27-Aug 2, Aug 3-9, Ages adult-$398, ages 4-2 $200, under 2 free

Family & Group Trips:
Call Wolf Ridge to arrange your canoe, hiking or kayaking trip

Split Rock 1/2 Day Kayak Tours:
(12yrs-adults) June-August: $59 each

Our youth camp programs offer unparalleled opportunities to explore clear lakes and streams, develop life-long connections to the natural world, make friends, create memories, and grow in self-confidence. With a wonderfully diverse campus and variety of activities, campers can return year after year for new experiences.

Grand Portage Expedition
The ultimate wilderness experience and a once in a lifetime trip for experienced campers! Campers will spend 12 days canoeing through the wilderness along the border of the Boundary Waters and Canada’s Quetico and La Verendrye Provincial Parks, concluding with the crossing of the Grand Portage to the original headquarters of the historic Northwest Company on the shores of Lake Superior. Campers must have prior experience and complete and submit an application before registering. Visit our website for an application.

For more information about Wolf Ridge programs:
1-800-523-2733 (WI, MN, ND)
or 218-353-7414
www.wolf-ridge.org

Shop on-line at the Wolf Ridge store: www.wolf-ridge.org

Payment:
Registrations must be accompanied by a $150 non-refundable deposit, family programs $50/person. Program fee minus deposit is due 2 weeks prior to program start.

Card # __ __ __ __-__ __ __ __-__ __ __ __-__ __ __ __
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For more information about Wolf Ridge programs:

Donor Member:
Gift receipt requested

For donations of $25 or more, Wolf Ridge will provide a receipt at the beginning of the calendar year which is tax deductible. Donors are sent quarterly updates of our program and volunteers.

www.wolf-ridge.org

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The ultimate wilderness experience and a once in a lifetime trip for experienced campers! Campers will spend 12 days canoeing through the wilderness along the border of the Boundary Waters and Canada’s Quetico and La Verendrye Provincial Parks, concluding with the crossing of the Grand Portage to the original headquarters of the historic Northwest Company on the shores of Lake Superior. Campers must have prior experience and complete and submit an application before registering. Visit our website for an application.

Visit our website at: www.wolf-ridge.org to learn more about these and other Wolf Ridge programs.
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Wolf Ridge’s “Bevy of Brews & A Kettle of Fish” Fundraiser on December 6th at the Great Lakes Aquarium drew over 250 people and raised $24,400 despite close to 30 inches of snow just days before the event. Thanks to a matching gift provided by Russ & Becky Bierbaum, roughly half of those funds are available to area schools as school scholarship assistance. Thank you to everyone who attended for your support.

Our mission is to develop a citizenry that has the knowledge, skills, motivation and commitment to act together for a quality environment.

We meet our mission by:
• Fostering awareness, curiosity and sensitivity to the natural world.
• Providing lifelong learning experiences in nature.
• Developing social understanding, respect and cooperation.
• Modeling values, behaviors and technologies, which lead to a sustainable lifestyle.
• Promoting the concepts of conservation and stewardship.

Wolf Ridge thanks these $1,000+ donors:

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