

[From Winter 2006 - 2007]

Educational Mission of CNHA Going Strong

Over the past few weeks many school groups have been visiting the Assateague Island Lighthouse. Board member, Bob Marz has also lined up some young volunteers, members of a service club at Chincoteague Middle School, to help out with greeting visitors on weekends at the lighthouse. This also is a unique educational opportunity for these eager young helpers and future refuge volunteers.

On Saturday, November 14th, a diverse group of students from a family literacy program operated out of the Eastern Shore Community College visited the refuge. Shore People Advancing Readiness for Kindergarten (SPARK) is an ongoing program which offers environmental education to parents and children on the Shore and they hosted the day. Headed by local educator Grace Cormons with assistance from her husband Matt, the educational fun and opportunities offered are unparalleled. Early on that day, a great white egret and an otter frolicked in the drainage water of the wildlife loop, and a few people who had arrived early got to observe these two wary playmates. For participants who missed that, walking in the woods and spotting deer, birds, squirrels and other wildlife was a highlight of the families' day facilitated by the Cormons. Those who chose to climb the lighthouse, take photos and just enjoy the view got to do that.

The children were delighted with pasting on their "I Climbed to the Top" red, white and blue stickers when they triumphed over the 198 stairs to the top. Later on the group moved to the beach to observe the sunset, at full dark a star gazing constellation talk was planned. The lighthouse was now in full swing lighting the beach up beautifully, but clouds came in and squelched the star walk. Nonetheless, the children were given their Milky Way bars even though they didn't get to see the real thing that night. They took home their maps and no doubt they will pick out the major constellations with their parents, using the maps. What a fine way to learn awe and love of the great outdoors and the importance of refuges to this nation's future. CNHA is happy to be able to help with this important work.