**Press Release**

Grace Christian Education Center **Contact information**

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Grace Christian Education Center awarded an $8,000 grant to begin "Outdoor Education" program.

Augmenting the school's academic curriculum, Grace Christian Education Center has extended learning activities beyond the classical classroom. A grant of $8,000 was recently awarded to Grace Christian Education Center, Coal Center, PA by the Western Pennsylvania Conference of Methodist Churches to implement an outdoor education curriculum, an extension of the schools current award winning academic curriculum.

The Christian Education Center will convert its 82 acre campus into an outdoor classroom. The site, complete with extensive woodlands heavily populated with trees and plants of multiple hardwood species, hiking trails, wetland areas hosting a variety of amphibious species, and abundant wildlife, will serve as an outdoor laboratory and platform for learning.

This winter, children will manage a bird feeding station, observe and record weather patterns and temperatures. Additional winter learning activities will be introduced as the outdoor education program further evolves.

During the summer and fall, children and their families will plant vegetable and flower gardens, and enjoy their fruitful harvest so carefully nurtured in the "centers" gardens. Activities such as creating floral arrangements from the flowers they raised, cooking in the outdoors and sharing their vegetables with nearby needy families will heighten children's awareness of the sights, sounds, scents and texture of important elements within their environment. Integral to these hands on experiences will be observation and recording of the elements of weather, such as rainfall and temperature, creating awareness and understanding of interaction of weather with crops raised by the students.

Outdoor education will provide hands-on learning and observation about plant growth, root structures of various plants and vegetables, the relationship of weather to plant life and wild life, exploration of woodlands to identify insects, wildlife and plant life, and solar movement during the various months and seasons in relationships to the life on earth.

The outdoor education curriculum being implemented by the Grace Christian Education Center will enhance student learning in science, math, nutrition and fitness. This unique experience will foster an understanding of environmental stewardship at an early age and will stimulate a synergistic connection between structured indoor learning and an application of that learning to everyday life within their environment.

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