

# Updated learning laboratory to reopen early 2018

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH KESSEL

After graduation in June, the Environmental Learning Center will shut down for restoration purposes and redesign of the area until the end of 2017. Students, staff and the community alike will be able to explore the new ELC at the beginning of 2018.

On Feb. 23, everyone from staff, to students and the community were invited to the ELC gathering where everyone could share their information, stories and artifacts.

The ELC has a rich history and many fun stories. For example, the lights in the Lakeside Education Hall were donated from the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, which were confiscated from a marijuana growing operation. Also, the ELC used to have one of the first recycling centers in Oregon.

Many stories and great experiences have taken place at the ELC, and for reasons like this, the ELC is getting a "makeover."

Some of the things to look forward to are: a new outdoor amphitheater for classes, seven new metal bridges made by welding students, and a clean-up of

the creek that runs through the site.

Other changes include new, large windows for classrooms, new restrooms to keep up with ADA compliance, an upgrade to the pavilion, turning it into a wetland and the addition of a Giving Tree.

The Giving Tree is part of a fundraising effort for sustaining the ELC.

"It's a learning experience for students," said Jennifer Nelson the project coordinator for the ELC restoration. "Our art department and welding department is creating a building that is structured out of metal, and it's going to be a large statue, basically a tree. We have multiple shaped leaves, and you can, for \$250, purchase a leaf. We're going to have a plaque on them, your name would be engraved."

Classes will be integrated with the ELC starting in 2018, which will get more students outside, according to Renee Harber, the ELC educational program manager.

"There has been a strong educational program here in the past, but it has gone up and down over the years," said Harber. "Our goal now is to bring it back up, to



where we're a leader in environmental education for the community, for K-12, for school groups. Community members will have community workshops, and also we want to do some industry trainings."

Harber is planning to get classes including welding, art, writing and biology outside, using the ELC for educational purposes.

Doug Neeley, former mayor of Oregon City and long-time supporter of CCC, agrees that the programs combined with the ELC will be successful.

"It will lead to more program activity occurring here that was lost in the past," said Neeley.

On May 18, there will be a restoration kickoff held at the ELC for everyone to participate in. On April 22, mini classes, craft projects and music will be held for Earth Day. People can learn about attracting wildlife, plant identification and more.

The ELC is a place of nature within the city, where people can listen to the birds and frogs while enjoying a walk over bridges. The restoration that will take place, will take a beautiful place and make it even better.



Jennifer Nelson of campus services and Renee Harber of horticulture attend the Environmental Learning Center ceremony on Feb. 23. The ELC and surrounding areas will be getting a facelift this summer and are expected to reopen in early 2018.

