

# The Courier News

50¢

Sunday, November 1, 2015



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Denver Mabe's newspaper of choice in Clinton, Tennessee • Volume 129 Issue 11

## To your Health (Day)

**Ken Leinart**  
editor@hometownclinton.com

There's a sort of informal rule at Briceville Elementary School: You can't get out of first grade until you've held a fish.

Friday morning Briceville Elementary held its 15th Annual Coal Creek Health Day and volunteer Charlie Saylor explained that rule to the first graders lining the banks of the creek behind the school.

### 15th Annual Coal Creek Health Day

"We had a fourth grader out here one year who had never held a fish," he told the gathered students. "But he'd just moved here that year, so he got a pass."

Saylor then had the students holding fish — real live things that wiggled and flopped in their hands with much screeching and giggling like only first graders can — while he told them what kind of fish it was.

"That's a redline darter," he told one student. "He's



The University of Tennessee's Joyce Coombs shows Briceville students Logan Vanover and Tyson Powers a fish taken from Coal Creek during Coal Creek Health Day. — Ken Leinart

## Health

from 1A

kinda small, try this one."

It's the stories the volunteers tell and the experience the students receive that make Coal Creek Health Day more than just a day of learning — it makes it a fun outing.

"The kids found a big fish, a bass, one year — we find one every year — and they named it 'Rocky,'" Coal Creek Watershed Foundation's Carol Moore said. "Every year those kids are looking for Rocky."

Moore and Barry Thacker are the backbone of the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation.

They are responsible for Coal Creek Health Day, as well as a plethora of projects centered on the students of Briceville.

"There aren't enough words to describe the impact Barry has had on the children of this school," Briceville educator Janis Bishop said.

While biologists and volunteers scour the creek to determine the "health" of the stream, they also explain to the students what they are finding and why it's so important. And that learning experience is repeated in the

classroom.

Bishop, who heads the school's technology lab, uses the Coal Creek Watershed Foundation's web page as a teaching tool throughout the year.

"I can use their web page and make a PowerPoint presentation and it gets the kids involved," she said. "They look at that page and maybe find a picture of themselves. It creates a fun environment."

Coal Creek Health is held on the last Friday of October. The first couple of years of the event students also received a free checkup from volunteer doctors and dentists, but as school nurses and in-school medical facilities became more accessible, that practice was halted.

"We tied in their physical health to the health of their environment," Moore said. "Let me tell you, there were some really disappointed doctors and dentists when we quit having them up here."

And volunteers do make the event what it is — fun and exciting for the students.

Take Saylor, who has attended every Coal Creek Health Day.

"He's with TVA," Barry Thacker noted. "Actually, he's retired from TVA, but he's here every year."

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# Focused On Our Community

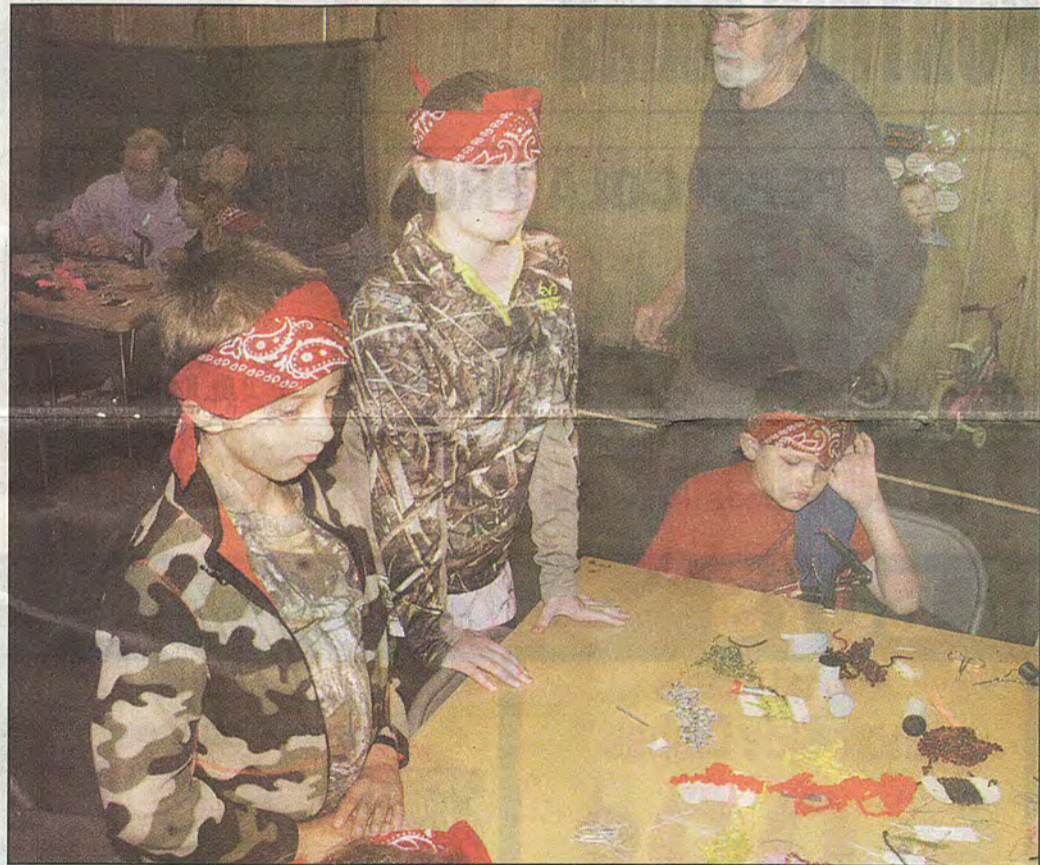


## 15th Annual Coal Creek Health Day



Volunteers hand Briceville Elementary School first graders a fish to hold. Logan Vanover, Sophie Shetterly, Tyson Powers, Bentley Gibson, Gavin Dugger and Kavin Bolton look apprehensive, while Levi Orick (left photo) smiles (yes, that's a smile he promised) for the camera.

Photos by Ken leinart



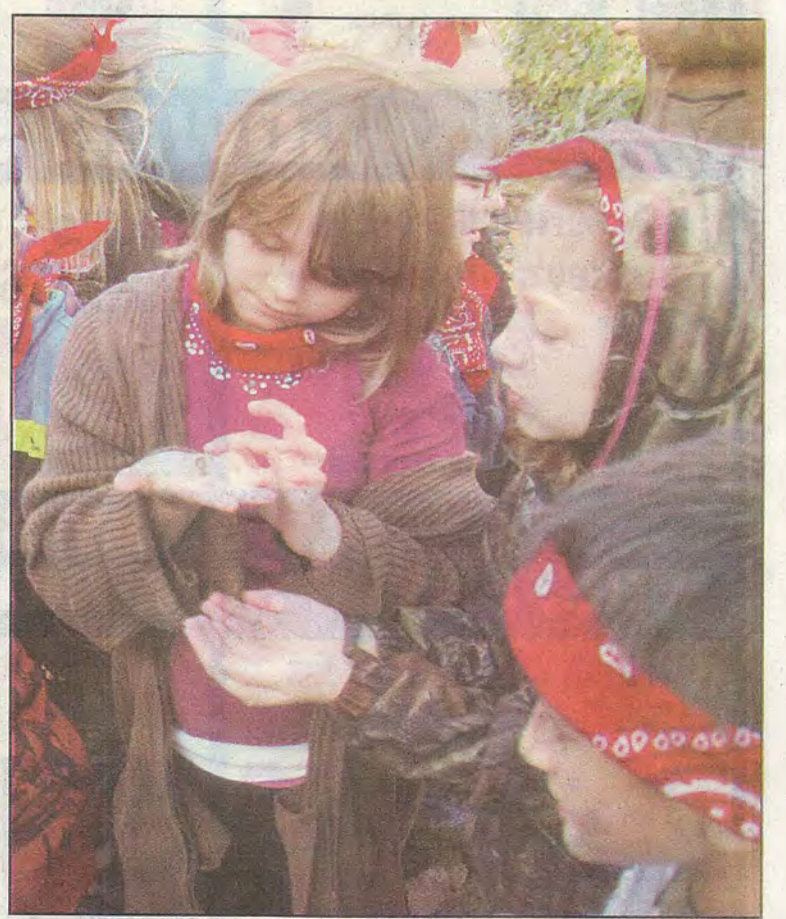
Left: Miranda Hamby, Logan Carroll, and Tommy Lee Phillips learns to tie flies in the Briceville gymnasium before heading to the creek. Above: Volunteer Charlie Saylor had taken part in every Health Day. He's pictured trying to get first graders to hold a crayfish.



According to legend, first graders have to hold a fish before going on to second grade.



Melissa Fleming shows Braylen Orick the proper way to hold a fish.



Natalie Bullock, Hannah Leinart, and Joshua Dockery examine a darter found in Coal Creek.