

Place-based service learning requires and thrives with community partnerships. That was one of the most important points learned and now implemented in our Trail to Every Classroom project.

Upward and Clear Creek Elementary students have been virtually hiking the Appalachian Trail and have met some inspiring folks along the way. Jen Pharr-Davis, the new world record holder for a women's assisted thru hike on the Appalachian Trail, kicked off the read-a-thon at both schools. **Diamond Brand's** Gary Eblen and **Carolina Mountain Club** members, Jan Onan, Haskel Davis, Kaye Shurtleff and Doreen Blue were on hand for family night in which over 300 people listened to Jen and then visited stations representing the regions of the AT. Julie Judkins of the **Appalachian Trail Conservancy** lent us wonderful displays and props, including a full size wooden Katahdin sign for the trail end. She was also at Upward on March 5<sup>th</sup> when **REI** sponsored Walkin' Jim Stolz, nationally-acclaimed singer-songwriter-long distance hiker as he shared sing-alongs, stories and beautiful slides in celebration of the end of our 21 day read-a-thon. Jim has walked over 27,000 miles and we figured that our top two readers had virtually done about the same as they earned 3 miles for every minute read. **LEKI**, supplied Jr. Trekking poles for the top two readers who logged over 8,000 minutes.

Invasive-exotic plants are a problem on many trails. Both Kristie Pace's (UPW) and Becky Ledbetter's (CC) classes have been studying these alien invaders and traveling to **Bullington Horticultural Center** for hands-on service-learning experiences guided by director, John Murphy. Prior to their first visit, Pete Petersen from the **CMC** Friday trail crew met with Pace's class to talk about trail maintenance. He then joined **CMC** members Bruce Bente, Gary Eblen, Jan Onan, and master gardeners Connie Smith and Clyde Case at **Bullington** for the work day where students removed English Ivy, Chinese Silvergrass and Autumn Olive. Students will conduct a similar service project on the Appalachian Trail in Hot Springs in May. We'll be looking for **CMC** volunteers to accompany us.

For more information about Trail to Every Classroom or to volunteer, contact Kate Fisher at [firepink17@gmail.com](mailto:firepink17@gmail.com), Jan Onan at [janonan@bellsouth.com](mailto:janonan@bellsouth.com) or Becky Ledbetter at [mountaingirl5674@aol.com](mailto:mountaingirl5674@aol.com)