

Wallins students' project offers Harlan County wildlife stories, photos; public signing Saturday at Jewelcraft in Village Center

Students from Wallins Elementary School will be signing copies of their recently published *Mountain Mysteries IV: Animal Encounters* from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 14, at Jewelcraft in the Village Center Mall.

Saturday's event will culminate the service learning project, funded in part by a grant from Learn and Serve America facilitated by Harlan County Community Education.

The sixth graders compiled and edited over 200 wildlife stories and photographs from students, faculty, staff and residents from throughout the Harlan County. The book has a total of 440 pages, including photographs taken by Harlan County photographers.

The stories were collected for the project by the sixth graders. These animal encounters include sightings of black bears, black panthers, turkeys, bobcats, elk, deer, snakes and many other animals, including black panthers.

"It is wonderful," said teacher Judith V. Hensley, noting a limited number of copies remain available for purchase. "This would also make a fantastic gift."

Student Cameron Lee said the book was a great experience for students.

"If you can learn to work together, you can accomplish anything," said Lee. "You just have to keep your mind to it and work toward a goal. Our goal was to make a book about animal encounters by people that we knew, especially the residents of Harlan County. Because we live in the mountains, we knew that animal encounters are not rare, yet nobody had written a book of stories that told about these encounters," says Cameron Lee.

"After stories started coming in, we broke them up into categories. We decided to put a report at the beginning of each section about that animal," said Breanna Epperson. "We wanted to let the readers know facts about the animals we were writing stories about. That means that our book is not only entertaining, but it tells facts and information about different animals. I enjoyed doing that, and proofreading to look for mistakes we had made before the book went to press."

Fellow student Danielle Lee said, "I liked reading other people's stories that happened where we live or close to where we live. I also like the photographs taken by people that live here. Ben Begley, from Pine Mountain Settlement School, came to our class and told a story about taking a group of people to stay overnight in a cave. A copperhead struck at him and got hung in the seam of his new stiff jeans. It didn't hurt him, but it was stuck on his pants leg and he was trying to kick it off. That was very funny. He also gave us great photos of venomous snakes."

Donald Lamb said, "My favorite part of the book is all of the black panther stories. People say they are not even around here, but they are. I have seen one myself. They live in these mountains."

"I knew there were lots of animals in Harlan, but I didn't know there were so many different kinds of dangerous wild animals in our mountains," noted Sasha Patterson. "I really enjoyed hearing people's encounters with wildlife in Harlan County."

And students will have the book as a reminder of this great learning experience for years to come.

"I loved writing stories for this book. It was a great experience," said Kaitlyn Sumpter. "I will remember this book forever and give it to my children for future generations to have and see what a group of students at Wallins School accomplished."

Books may be purchased for \$20 on Saturday or by contacting Hensley by email at judy.hensley@harlan.kyschools.us or calling 664-3444. To have one shipped, there is a \$5 shipping charge.

Books may be ordered from Amazon at a cost of \$25. However, the students benefit with greater profits from their direct sell to the public.



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