



STAFF EDITOR SUSAN CAMPBELL

WHAT TIME IS IT? Susan Campbell inspects the progress of the students' sundials at Lakewood Elementary.

Naturalist Shows Kids Joys of Science

Students learn natural history in after-school program

By Laurie Orloff
Special Contributor

What more could a beautiful green and gnarly-wooded community like Lakewood want, than its own personal lady of the woods?

Susan Campbell, founder of Science Safari, has had her hands in the dirt and on the pulse of what makes our city tick.

"I'm this crazy science nut, unleashed on the city, with no one to stop me," she said. "The kids call me the 'Science Lady.'"

Ms. Campbell last week showed Lakewood Elementary students how to make sundials as part of a series of monthly after-school programs.

Lakewood Elementary's after-school program coordinator Tomi Watkins explained how much the kids look forward to the Tuesdays when the "science lady" comes.

Fifth-grader Madison Wald dug into the assignment and knocked out his sundial before the others.

"I absolutely love coming to this," she said. "We made animals before, and that



HELPING HANDS: Morgan Riney waits to be given a nail that will be used to make a sundial.

was a lot of fun, too."

Ms. Campbell has a history with Lakewood Elementary. In 1997 she began what is called the LOLA Project (Lakewood Outdoor Learning Area). She and a small group of parents began clearing a trail in the wooded area behind the school.

She wrote a successful grant proposal to Texas Parks and Wildlife, which awarded the group a grant to build the trail, complete

with cement path with imprints of animal tracks and leaves, learning stations, and bridges.

Once completed, she led a six-week outdoor educational program for the school's students. Each student spent a 45-minute session on the trail, and the school was transformed for one night into the Lakewood Museum of Natural History.

"For our one-night museum, I invited about a dozen scientist and representatives from various natural history-focused organizations to be presenters. We also served chocolate-covered crickets," she said.

Maria Luna, a construction manager who had two daughters in the program at the time, said that before the project, the area was "basically a ditch with a bunch of garbage."

A few years ago, Dallas ISD contracted with Ms. Campbell to create staff development programs for elementary school teachers.

Last week the district announced that she was



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awarded a grant for teaching in two elementary schools this summer.

But she's not confined to schools. Ms. Campbell is frequently consulted when pets are sick.

Nine-year-old Phoenix Abbo had a pet corn snake that was dying. Ms. Campbell visited the boy's house to comfort him and make a batch of mouse stew for the baby snake.

"I'm glad she tried to help save Phideaux's life," Phoenix said. "She knows so much about snakes."



STAFF PHOTO: ARIANNA LOPEZ

SAY PLEASE: Students eagerly await the materials needed to make their after-school project.