

## VISITS FOR HOMESCHOOLERS AT SEQUATCHIE VALLEY INSTITUTE AT MOONSHADOW

### Information for Parents

Every day is Earth Day at the Sequatchie Valley Institute at Moonshadow, a community that is a model of environmental sustainability. Kids are welcome at Moonshadow, where technology, ecology, biology, art, and sustainable living come together. SVI, with 350 acres of forests and trails, edible landscapes integrated into the forest ecosystem, and solar-powered hand-crafted structures built of native materials, is a living laboratory where children and adults can learn the natural history of the forest, discover how to grow their own food, and find out how people can live simple, fulfilling, and sustainable lifestyle. Students will experience edible landscapes, permaculture, ecological building techniques, solar electricity, and forest ecology.

**TOURS AND ACTIVITIES:** Plan for travel time (1 hour from Chattanooga) and from 2 to 5 hrs at Moonshadow. We prefer to arrange tours for groups of at least 6 students. Tours include a guided forest hike, a visit to the homes and llamas, and an educational walk through the gardens and orchards. A general description follows. Afternoon activities may include a work project or you may call to arrange specific activities. We will personalize each tour to the age and interests of the group.

We also have a crafts gallery with items made by our staff and books. Students may wish to purchase a small item costing under \$10.00.

**COSTS:** We would appreciate a donation of \$5-\$6/student for the 2-hour tour and \$8 for the full day with additional activities. Parents \$5 please.

**OVERNIGHT TRIPS:** We can arrange overnight low-impact camping programs for small groups and families. Call for details.

**PREPARATION:** Students will be walking about 1 1/2 miles (total) on forest trails and should wear long pants and walking shoes. They may wish to bring insect repellent, hats, and rain jackets if the weather is bad. We can reschedule if it's pouring! If staying over the noon-hour, bring lunches and drinks. If you bring lunches in ice chests, we can arrange for a shuttle up to the lunch location. Sustainable packaging is encouraged. Trash must be carried out. A backpack will be useful. They will need a notepad and pencil to answer some fun questions and take notes on what they do.

**ARRIVAL:** On arrival at SVI, the group will become part of a "tribe" of 6-13 students with their own forest guide. Tribes will take the name of a forest tree and each student will be given a wooden name tag to personalize. If there is more than one tribe, the groups will separate and make their way up different forest trails.

**HIKING IS FUN!** There will be numerous stops along the way for observations and discussions (and rests!). These will include:

\*Get acquainted with Hicks Creek at the parking area: What is a "ford"? Walk across the bridge high above the creek. It's built from old guard rails.

\*Visit a round house that is heated by the sun. Learn about how you can make your own electricity and sell it back to the electric company.

\*How was coal mined on this mountain? Find out how coal was transported down the incline rail.

\*Observe the trees--find your tribe's tree; how big are there any holes in them? What lives in the holes? Would you want to build your own road? How do we prevent erosion on the roads and trails? What's the carpet out in the woods for? What birds or animals do you see? What did the North American Indians find in the forest for food, building, and medicine?

MOONSHADOW, A HOUSE RUN BY THE SUN: Tribes will then arrive at this home and office run completely by electricity from the sun. Moonshadow was built by hand from the rocks and logs of the mountainside and is a passive solar design, which allows heating by the sun in winter. Observations will include:

\*Where does the electricity come from?

\*A model house with a tiny solar panel will demonstrate the process of photovoltaics.

\*Look at the solar panels. What makes them move? Where do we get electricity when the sun doesn't shine? Find out about battery storage.

\*Would you like to carry wood for the fireplaces in winter?

\*All of the logs were cut by hand and all the rocks were carried from the surrounding land. Would you like to do that much work for a house?

\*The water comes by gravity from a spring! How does that work?

\*What does "sustainable living" mean? Do you live sustainably?

GARDENS FOR KIDS: Tribes will walk through the gardens, discovering new smells, tastes, and colors in our "edible landscape"--yes, you can touch and smell everything! (These activities will vary depending on the season, although there is always something happening.) How do bugs fit in? Are they always bad? Look for good bugs. Trace the web of life in the gardens. How do lizards and frogs help us? Why are there so many flowers? Take home a sample of your favorite sweet-smelling herb.

ANIMALS OF MOONSHADOW: Learn how to pet the llamas. Watch for our green anole lizards.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: Ponds, both large and small, provide homes for many creatures. Watch especially for dragonflies and frogs.

MUD DAUBER: Every kid's dream is this fairy story house built of mud with grass for a roof. You may get to add your own bit of mixed clay to a model house—plan to get really muddy. Climb up in the loft and peek out the windows.

LUNCH TIME: Take your own sack lunch to the "Wedding Rocks" for a peaceful meal on the great rocks surrounded by ancient trees. We hope you didn't bring a lot of disposable items. Be sure to take home your waste to reuse or recycle.

**BACK HOME:** Don't forget what you did! When you get back, write down your experiences in your journal. What did you learn that you can use at home and in school? How could you make your own home and your own life more self-sustaining and less damaging to the natural world? Can you design a solar house? Try it!

**HOW TO GET HERE FROM THE CHATTANOOGA REGION:** We are located just off Rt. 28 near Cartwright, between Whitwell and Dunlap. It will take about 1 hour from most locations in Chattanooga.

**From North Chattanooga:** Take Hwy 111 from Soddy-Daisy to Dunlap. Turn left at the ramp exit and drive through Dunlap. At the last light, take the right fork, which is Rt. 28 (passes by the schools and BiLo). Travel 7 miles to Cartwright Loop, just past a small store, and before Cartwright Automotive. Turn right on Cartwright Loop and go 0.7 mi. to Box # 1233. We will have an SVI sign at the mailbox. Turn in and park. You will be met.

**From East Chattanooga, downtown, and UTC:** You may come via Interstate 24 toward Nashville. Take exit 155 to Dunlap. Proceed north on Hwy 28 for 18 miles (you will pass through Whitwell). Just after the Sequatchie County sign, watch for Cartwright Automotive, a white and red building, on the left. Turn left just after that on Cartwright Loop. Go 0.7 miles to Box #1233 and an SVI sign. Turn in and park. You will be met.

For more information, contact:  
Carol Kimmons, Education Program  
Director  
Sequatchie Valley Institute  
1233 Cartwright Loop  
Whitwell, TN 37397  
Phone: 423-949-5922  
e-mail: [carol-kimmons@utc.edu](mailto:carol-kimmons@utc.edu)  
website: [svionline.org](http://svionline.org)

The Sequatchie Valley Institute is a non-profit organization whose mission is to offer society an opportunity to experience and learn about living in harmony with nature by providing:

- a dynamic model residence and learning center
- education, research, art, land conservation and restoration; and
- a vision for attaining a sustainable future