

Sugar Shack Brought Back to Forest Area School by Nonprofit SEEDS

November 13, 2020 by Katie Birecki, Catherine Emery

The nonprofit SEEDS brought back a sweet part of Forest Area School's curriculum—maple sugaring.



“We replaced the building that was here previously when the school had maple sugared back here,” said Joe Kreider, SEEDS' site coordinator for the after school program. “They had a pretty big operation but that building was falling into disrepair and we wanted to get our after school kids out here doing that again.”

The activity was popular at the school in the 1980s but was stopped around 15 years ago.

“Hearing how big a part of the curriculum it was back then, we just wanted to get back into it,” Kreider said.

Kreider and a group of middle schoolers started a maple sugaring group last fall. Now, thanks to some grants and donations, they have the space and equipment to properly make syrup.

The new Sugar Shack was purchased using donations from community fundraising and grants from the Grand Traverse Stewardship Initiative, Grass River Natural Area, Great Lakes Energy People Fund, and Rotary Good Works.

“They're going to learn the whole process from start to finish,” Kreider said. “From tapping the trees and hauling the sap, boiling it down, and then finishing it off and bottling it.”

Students won't just be learning about making maple syrup, they'll also be learning skills they can apply in the classroom.

“We'll be doing a lot of science and math projects out here,” Kreider said. “We will come out and select the trees, measure the trees, and kind of figure out which ones we can tap. Then we'll estimate from there what we think our yield of syrup might be based on how many trees we tap.”

Students like seventh grader Avah Burgess are excited to get started.

“I think it's kind of cool,” Burgess said. “Learning how to make it, bottle it up, and how to measure, what trees to tap and all that.”