

Marklund Hyde Center classes raise and release monarch butterflies



Students in Marklund's Community Day Services program in Geneva are learning about the life cycle of monarch butterflies. Daily Herald File Photo

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It's butterfly season, and the Marklund Hyde Center is helping to spread some wings.

Located in Geneva, the Hyde Center's Community Day Services program provides daily vocational and educational activities for adults with developmental disabilities.

One such educational activity was a lesson on the seasons. Stephanie Dellegrazie, community integration special events coordinator at the Hyde Center, decided to add some color to the lesson by teaching the class about the life cycles of monarch butterflies, complete with actual

butterflies.

"My cousin showed me the butterfly project and I did it toward the end of the season last year," Dellegrazie said. "I thought, 'well, this would be really cool for our students!'"

Each classroom has a developmental instructor, and Stephanie worked with them to create a cross-curriculum project to incorporate into the unit on seasons.

Each instructor gave lessons that included videos and pictures of the butterflies' life cycles in addition to personal support professionals showing the students how their own butterflies were progressing.

Dellegrazie and the community integration team also took the students on community outings to obtain the supplies needed for the project, including a trip to Starbucks for the cups to keep the caterpillars' food in.

"We started this project by learning about the butterfly life cycle in our classrooms," said Jeannie Stefanik, Community Day Service program manager at the Marklund Hyde Center. "We incorporated the project into our Community Integration Program by offering outings to look for milkweed and purchase supplies for our butterfly habitat.

"Starbucks donated the cups we used to keep the milkweed hydrated. The residents, community clients and staff have all enjoyed watching the butterfly life cycle. It's been a really fun project!"

Once the caterpillars became butterflies, the students got together to release their colorful friends into the wild.

Dellegrazie explains that monarch butterfly populations have been dropping in recent years, and a lot of people are undergoing similar projects to help bolster the butterflies' shrinking numbers.

"I'm on different Facebook groups that show pictures of their butterfly projects and they are happy to help with any questions," Dellegrazie said. "It's a big community and it raises awareness to help the situation."

The Community Day Services classes at the Hyde Center have released 42 butterflies in total, and are currently waiting for one caterpillar to enter its pupa state. In addition, there are another 16 eggs waiting to hatch.

Marklund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that serves infants, children, teens and adults with serious and profound developmental disabilities and special healthcare needs. With three residential locations, it is currently home to more than 170 clients.

Visit www.marklund.org or www.facebook.com/MarklundCharity.

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