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MARCH 2007

Mastodon Matrix Project teaches area about our past

Seymour Middle School eighth-graders are analyzing sediment recovered from a Mastodon excavation site in New York to document past environmental characteristics. This opportunity is made possible through a GK-12 grant funded by the National Science Foundation of the University of Tennessee. The \$1.97 million grant is designed to broaden science education by finding graduate students to bring active research and hands on activities to area middle schools.

The program has placed 10 graduate students from the Departments of Geography and Earth and Planetary

Sciences in middle schools in Sevier, Blount, Knox, and Jefferson counties. Marian White and Michelle Ballard are teacher partners working with geography students Justin Hart and Sara Dean to enhance the 8th grade science curriculum at Seymour Middle.

One of the activities in which Seymour students are participating is the Mastodon Matrix Project based at Cornell University. Students are sorting through a matrix (sediment) of material from the Hyde Park Mastodon excavation site in New York. On the Hyde Park excavation, in August of 1999 Larry Lozier hired an excavator to deepen the pond

in the backyard of his home in suburban Hyde Park, New York. A week later, when the excavator had finished, Larry and his wife Sheryl noticed what they thought was a log lying beside the pond. When they examined it more closely they found it was an enormous bone (which turned out to be a humerus or upper forelimb bone). After a few hours on the Internet Larry was convinced that he had found remains of a mastodon, and he began to contact professional paleontologists to come and check out his discovery.

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The Discovery Channel films the science behind the bones, as PRI's Jim Sherpa discusses the conditions of the mastodon's remains.

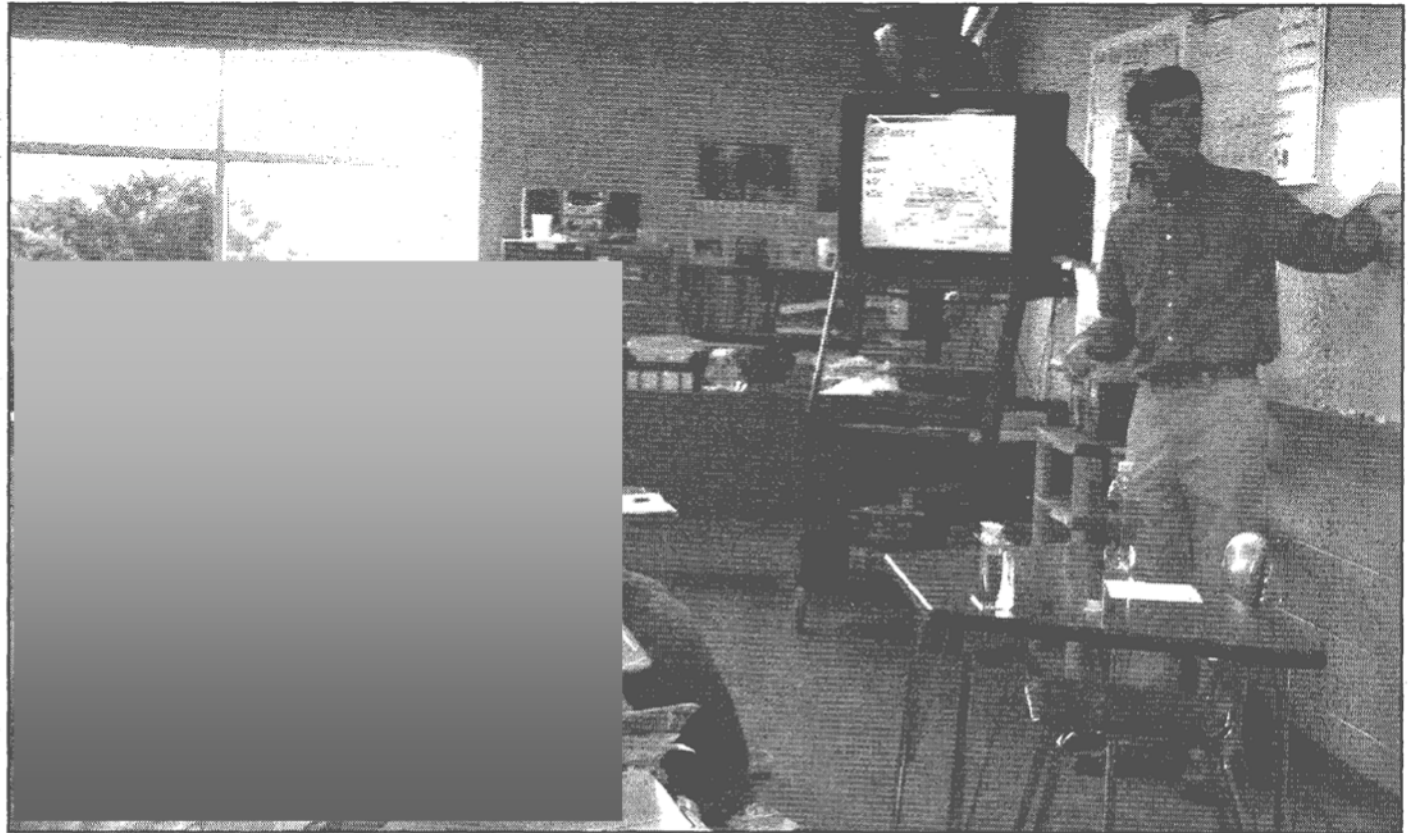
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CLUB HERALD

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Students at the middle schools are recovering and identifying plant, organic, and inorganic remains from the matrix. Material collected by the students will be sent to researchers at the Paleontological Research Institute of Cornell. Other area schools in the University of Tennessee GK-12 Earth Project are also participating in the nation-wide project to document the environmental history of the Hyde Park excavation site. In Sevier County, Northview Middle School was also chosen to participate.



A graduate student from the University of Tennessee instructs students at Seymour Middle School through a grant program.

Photo by Michele Karl