

Thank you very much for allowing the reading of my statement.

My name is Barbara Weiner. In 2017 I created a program, Chicago Nature Seekers. The goal is to bring underserved children from schools that are more than 90% low income out into nature. Over the past years, I have brought children to nature experiences from Cook County Districts 1,2,4,7,8,10, and 12. My partners have been the district's Nature Centers. I have brought more than 2000 students out into nature. In the Fall of 2021, I had 5 field trips with 288 students at River Trail.

Last month, I listened to your meeting on the coyote. **The point that I think was missed, when all agreed that he could not survive on his own in nature, was his importance as an educator.** On our trip a River Trail the Ranger showed the students the animals in enclosures. The students asked:

1. Why are they in cages?
2. Where is their family?
3. What happens to them when it snows?

The Ranger explained how each animal came to River Trail. They all had been wounded in some way and would not survive on their own anymore. River Trial is a place that allows them to live. The Ranger was able to help the children understand about the role of each to our eco system. They were told how the staff fed and cared for them.

From the students thank you notes, the coyote was the animal they most identified with. They liked seeing it walk around its enclosure, looking at them. They learned that as the winter approaches, the coyote's fur gets thicker so it can continue to live outside. The Ranger explained the importance of a coyote to our environment. The students were spellbound.

What makes the Forest Preserve Nature Centers really special, is that you have live animals and the students can see them, in some

cases touch them, and learn about them from the Rangers. Can you imagine at the end of the day when their mother asked “What did you do today?”, their excitement in telling her about seeing a coyote. Those children will never forget this. Hopefully the experience will make them more sensitive to a wide range of environmental issues.

**The value of this educational experience should not be underestimated.** Think how incredible it is for a child or even an adult to watch a coyote up close and being able to ask questions. This is a priceless experience, one not worth risking placing the coyote in some other setting, when he seems to be doing well in Northbrook. Please when considering the coyote add into the equation his value as an educator to thousands of children about the environment.

Thank you for your time.