

Avery County Penny Challenge for Eagle Habitat

Written by Landis Wofford, Grandfather Mountain
Monday, 16 April 2012 11:39

Avery County elementary students collected their loose change March 19 - 30 and brought it to school for the Penny Challenge hosted by the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation. The five elementary schools collected a total of \$3,745.75, all benefitting the upcoming renovations on the eagle habitats at Grandfather Mountain. Newland Elementary School raised the most change with a total of \$1,226.06. Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation President Penn Dameron and members of the habitat staff visited the school last week to announce that Kelly Ward's third grade class was the overall winner for the county with a total of \$253.78. The class received balloons, candy, a framed photograph of Grandfather Mountain's golden eagle Morely and a trip to Grandfather Mountain that will include a behind the scenes tour of the animal habitats. During the field trip, the students will make and give enrichments to the habitat animals.

The top class at each of the four other elementary schools were also rewarded with an upcoming trip to Grandfather. These four classes receive a guided habitat tour and will also be able to make and give enrichments to the animals. The winning classes are Beth Waycaster's second and third grade combination class from Banner Elk Elementary, Nancy Christensen's first grade class from Riverside Elementary, Julie Johnson's fourth grade class from Crossnore Elementary and Jessica Jones' fifth grade class from Freedom Trail Elementary.

"We would like to thank every student that participated in the Penny Challenge," said Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation Habitats Manager Christie Tipton. "The amount raised by the entire county is incredible and we can't wait to start these renovations."

Though the current eagle habitats at Grandfather Mountain are attractive and well maintained, the enclosure is open-topped, creating several potential issues. Ravens, bears and other animals can enter the eagles' home, stealing their food and posing a threat to their well-being.

Another drawback stemming from the lack of a fully enclosed eagle habitat is Grandfather's inability to adopt other eagles that may be partially or fully flighted. Even though these eagles may have the ability to fly normally, other injuries, such as eye problems, could render them unable to hunt for food and survive in the wild. The renovations, set to occur later this year, will add tops to the enclosures.

The Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation is a not-for-profit corporation established to preserve Grandfather Mountain, operate the nature park sustainably in the public interest, provide an exceptional experience for guests, and inspire them to be good stewards of the earth's resources. For more information, visit www.grandfather.com or call 800-468-7325.