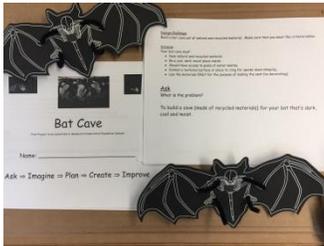




**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Deane-Porter's STEM Makerspace Continuing to Educate its' Students about Local Conservation**



Deane-Porter's STEM Makerspace program, run by teachers Liz Waters and Mark Panas, has had the opportunity to participate with the MCF (Monmouth Conservation Foundation) in an effort to educate their kindergarten students about local conservation efforts for the last three years.

Each year, the MCF runs a contest with the mission of educating young children about the importance of conservation within Monmouth County. The STEM Makerspace program at Deane-Porter placed 2nd in 2017's eagle contest, earned a 1st place award in 2018's local farm contest, and is currently enrolled in 2019's bat awareness contest. Additionally, the STEM program earned a free Assembly from the MCF regarding owls and their environmental benefits to the local community.

The current bat contest's purpose is to raise awareness of Monmouth County's local bat population and the important role bats play in the ecosystem. Mark Panas and Liz Waters developed a STEM unit specifically for this contest. The lessons have been designed to encourage their students to use the engineering design process to learn about bats and their habitat. Deane-Porter's kindergarten students have studied the benefits of bats, where they live and how they help reduce mosquito populations.



“We want our students to have the experience of researching, discussing and reflecting about the importance of local bats through a hands on approach,” stated both Mark Panas and Liz Waters. Through literature, reference materials and videos, students examined bat features, where they live and how to protect them. Once they had the basic background knowledge, students used life size models of bats to design and construct bat caves using natural and recycled materials. Students imagined, planned and created prototypes. All five kindergarten classes have worked together using makerspace materials to build a classroom bat cave that mimics a typical cave environment. Features such as dark, damp, near water, and a place for the bats to hang upside down were included in the life size model.

The caves will be entered in this year's contest were entered as one submission to the contest run by the Monmouth Conservation Foundation.