How does Imago do virtual programming?

By: Sara Briggs, Education + Camps Coordinator

A huge part of Imago’s mission is to get students outside, away from screens, and enjoying nature. But how do you do that when learning goes virtual? Over the past year Imago has learned a lot about what works when it comes to doing outdoor education virtually.

When schools were shut down last March, Imago quickly pivoted our programming with well received opportunities to get students outside such as Imago Rangers (imagoearth.org/imago-rangers) and Backyard Adventures. We found a lot of success with those programs and have used what we learned to create fun and engaging afterschool programming this year with our school partners.

We have learned that the key to effective online programming is building relationships, as evidenced by our partnership with Roberts Academy.

We were very lucky to be able to do some in-person programming with students from Roberts in the fall and were able to transition to weekly virtual meetings with those same students as the weather got colder.

During these virtual meetings, we work with students to do an activity like building a miniature zip line or creating a nature journal. The materials for these activities are drawn from a box that Imago puts together and sends out to each of the students in the afterschool group. We’ve also developed some virtual games to play as a group which is a fun way to get students engaged online.

Our virtual programming is largely student-driven and has led to many fun discussions about everything from bioluminescence to why animals hibernate in the winter!

With creativity and flexibility, Imago has been able to continue to provide engaging and exciting nature-based programming for our students.
We’ll cover everything from planting pollinators to turning your yard into a meadow. You don’t need to have a big outdoor space or a lot of experience to make these changes. Even those of us with just a window box to offer can help improve the biodiversity in our neighborhoods.

And don’t forget that if you’re looking to make some changes to your garden this spring that you can rent everything from shovels to wheelbarrows from Imago’s Queen City Thingery!

Make sure you are following us on Facebook and Instagram (@imagoearth) or visit our website for all the latest updates.
Running a grassroots nonprofit like Imago is a constant reminder of the constraints of budget and resources. What is one to do? You can stay bound and follow a conventional path, or you can let your passions light the way and tread down the path that leads to new, untrod places. From Eileen, I learned that while you respected constraints, you didn’t let them define what needed to be done, but when I would watch her in action, I would get it. The way that Eileen carried herself, how she spoke about the things she cared about, her family, her community, her dreams, she embodied her passions so gracefully and fully, that you couldn’t help to be inspired by them.

As husband and wife for over 50 years, it’s hard to separate Jim and Eileen and what they each brought to Imago, but some things about Eileen stick out. For one, Jim helped me understand why Imago did things but Eileen helped me feel them. I don’t really know that Eileen ever really explained to me why we were doing something, but when I would watch her in action, I would get it. The way that Eileen carried herself, how she spoke about the things she cared about, her family, her community, her dreams, she embodied her passions so gracefully and fully, that you couldn’t help to be inspired by them.

One of my first and favorite Imago memories, was a staff meeting as a new employee. Jim lofted an idea (as he is wont to do) and Eileen said right away, “Jim that’s a stupid idea” or something to that effect. I think Jim pushed back a little, and Eileen kept saying in a very clear way how she felt about Jim’s idea huge fight at work, in front of EVERYONE,” people just didn’t do that. I had seen my parents fight like that, maybe two or three times and NEVER in front of other people. I figured this would take weeks or months for things to return to normal. The “fight” lasted less than 30 seconds, and Jim and Eileen went right back to being a loving husband and wife team. I realized after years of working with Eileen (and witnessing many more “fights” like these) that how you care about an idea, does not affect how you care about a person. You can choose to disagree, openly and clearly and sometimes angrily about a thing, because it did not affect how you felt about the community and the people you worked with and worked for. In fact, that same love of your community and people made it possible to fight for them, even if that fight was at times intimidating.

One image sticks in my mind. It was at Music in the Woods, two or three years ago. Eileen was no longer a regular voice at Imago, but still participated in events and still supported the work. Eileen was sitting in a chair just outside the building. There was a throng of people going in and out of the building and she was the only one sitting. She was surrounded by friends standing, talking and visiting with her. She was beaming a giant smile, laughing and sharing stories. She was holding court. It’s a “pose” that I had seen Eileen take at other times and at other events, and every time I saw it, it brought me joy. Seeing her among the people she loved, the people that she helped to bring together.

Eileen was laid to rest literally up the street from where she spent the majority of her life. From her grave you can see gardens and trees that she planted, and nature that she preserved. I am ever grateful that I learned from her and am asked to continue her work. She is missed but not forgotten and we will continue to carry forward, inspired by Eileen, doing big work, being clear in our passions to bring the world, not what has always been done, but rather, what needs to be done. For people and for planet.
What's new at the preserve?

Imago has been busy adding many new features to the nature preserve and improving the existing trails. Read on to learn more about the new additions and check out our new trail map! Digital copies can be downloaded at imagoearth.org/nature and physical copies are located at our main trailheads.

Art on Trails
This past fall we were excited to see the first art in nature piece installed at Imago. The piece, entitled 'Transitions,' was created by local artists Amy Tuttle and Emily Farison. Using reclaimed willow branches donated by the Taft Museum of Art from the museum's Far Flung sculpture, Tuttle and Farison constructed a piece offering homage to the multi-faceted experience of change, seen and unseen, that we undergo as individuals and communities.

You can find 'Transitions' along the right side of the Enright Avenue entrance trail. More installations are coming this spring, come out and explore the trails and you might just find a piece in the works!

Nature Exploration Areas
Our awesome volunteer crews have been working hard to install some new exploration stations at Imago, namely a giant bird’s nest and a treehouse equipped with a rain barrel! More exploration stations are coming soon, follow us on social media for all the latest updates.

Other Improvements
In addition to the new map, we’ve also installed new trail markers to help you explore the preserve. You can also check out the new set of stairs on the Hackberry Hills trail and take a mindful walk in our Labyrinth. See you at Imago!

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A donation of ANY amount is greatly appreciated!
There’s many ways to donate.

- Text 'Imago2021' to 44321
- Call us at (513) 921-5124
- Or scan the code below
- Mail a check
- Visit imagoearth.org/donate

Thank You!