



Director says week successful

By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

Since 1989 the Imperial Grade School Foundation has sponsored a hands-on science camp, or SCORE (Science Camps Offer Rewarding Experiences). Rewarding was definitely the definitive word this year.

Representing nine states from California to Alabama, a total of 360 students in grades 1-6 spent last week in Chase County at “It’s Alive.”

The students included a busload of 25 from Franklin, Neb. for one day, and 30 from Ogallala Middle School all week.

Director Marla Smith said this was the largest number of students ever to attend SCORE. The first year, in 1989, about 100 attended, all from Imperial Grade School.

SCORE began in 1989 when former resident Sue Renken was searching for a summer science camp for her son. Most were located in the mountains.

She approached Smith, a former elementary science teacher, who was herself interested in offering a camp “for things that couldn’t be done in the classroom.”

That first year, the camp was spread over three weeks, with each week devoted to either grades 1-4, 5-6 or 7-8.

At first, the camps were held every year. Then, they were offered on alternative years, with a space camp for older youth, or a 3-day camp for older children, offered on the alternate years.

In all, this was the 13th camp for the week-long SCORE.



Students this year attended demonstrations and workshops at Chase County Schools, Cox’s Ponds, Bauerles’ Pond, Campbell Park and Swinging Bridge Ranch.

The focus of this year’s camp was life sciences. Students studied fossils, animal signs, the digestive system, birds, exotic and domestic animals, pond dwellers, fishing, the aquifer, and more.

Smith said the most popular offerings included “Goats, Nature’s Weed Whackers,” with local resident Bruce Peterson. He brought goats from his Peterson Boer Goats herd and discussed how they can eradicate weeds and invasive species of bushes and trees.

Every student was able to pet or feed a goat. Smith said she “heard over and over how they enjoyed the program. They didn’t know too much about goats.”

Another popular attraction was the SCORE Zone in the Shorthorn Gym. Students floated between 25-30 activities manned by scientists and volunteers, learning about sound, speed, robots, fossils, raccoons, etc.

“They got to a lot of activities during a 30-minute session,” Smith observed.

Always popular with students were representatives from Edgerton Explorit Center in Aurora. This year Ken Schroeder examined “Growthology,” or the human body and what it does. Why does a person burp, or pass gas?

This was a hit with students. Some could even belch on command.

Smith said the highlight of the week was “just seeing how the community comes together to make it all happen—the volunteers, staff, doing above and beyond what their job is.”



Between the end of May and the beginning of SCORE an extra 75-100 students signed up, Smith said, which made extra work. “Everyone pitches in, people of all ages, to help out, volunteer, give back. It’s gratifying that the community feels the program is worthwhile enough to make it happen.”

Smith also enjoys seeing her former students and former SCORE students returning to volunteer, direct or teach at the camp.

There were 450 volunteer slots during the five days of camp, not counting the pre- and post-camp chores, Smith noted.

“It went pretty smooth, and that’s the way we like it,” Smith said of SCORE. “A big thank-you to everyone who played a part. They can all share ownership and the success of the camp.”

Although it hasn’t yet been approved by the IGS Foundation, Smith said plans are to have a three-day mini camp, or SCORE TAC (Team Adventure Camp) next summer.

Geared toward older students, the camp doesn’t focus as much on science as it does on outdoor education, camping, historical education and survival skills.