



Princeton Academy and Ridgeview Conservancy Announce Partnership to Promote Conservation and Ecological Knowledge

Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart is partnering with Ridgeview Conservancy, a local land trust and environmental education non-profit, to conserve land on the Academy's property and enrich the school's curriculum with outdoor, place-based, experiential learning. Research demonstrates that children learn better out of doors in close contact with nature where they are free to explore. Contact with nature also lowers depression and anxiety and acts as an equalizer, boosting self-esteem and creativity.

Princeton Academy's Interim Head of School, Kathy Humora, has years of experience designing and implementing programs such as *Learning through Landscapes*. She is keen to deepen the school's focus on environmental education with outdoor courses to prepare youth for the future they will face. This focus aligns well with Ridgeview Conservancy's mission to boost ecological literacy among youth and restore their ability to "read the natural landscape."

Over the past decade, Ridgeview Conservancy has engaged hundreds of students in addressing critical environmental issues, including climate change and species extinction, through local conservation efforts. The students have actively participated in conserving and restoring some of the last tracts of unprotected forests and wetlands in Princeton. Along with the Watershed Institute's StreamWatch Schools program, students will also be able to monitor water quality through visual, biological, and chemical assessments.

Princeton Academy is uniquely positioned to become a leader in environmental education and forest and climate training. The campus is a veritable arboretum with a wide range of species and century-old specimen trees, including magnolia, tulip poplar, and sycamore. In addition, Ridgeview Conservancy, along with partners -- including the Watershed Institute, Friends of Princeton Open Space, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, D&R Greenway, and Princeton Municipality -- have preserved 186 acres of forest and wetlands near the school. These will provide fascinating outdoor laboratories for students to study endangered species habitat, water quality, carbon sequestration, and indigenous and African American history.

Princeton Academy is also partnering with Ridgeview Conservancy and the Watershed Institute and Friends of Princeton Open Space, to preserve two parcels of land on the school's campus and establish a 6-acre conservation easement along its western border. This partnership effort aims to prevent further land development, allowing the Academy to grant Ridgeview Conservancy the option to purchase the two buildable lots for conservation, thereby creating a vital link in Princeton's Emerald Necklace.

To kick off the partnership, on Thursday, October 10th, Princeton Academy and Ridgeview Conservancy held a public event with Dr. Jonathan Kingdon, a renowned wildlife ecologist, evolutionary biologist, author, and artist, who spoke about his new book *Origin Africa*, published by Princeton University Press. The world's leading authority on African mammals, Dr. Kingdon, has trained thousands of students about the natural history of Africa, believing that the next generation must understand ecosystems to help conserve the remarkable plants and wildlife dependent upon them.
