Hello again!

We’ve made it to fall and the end of our season is in sight! But, we’re not quite there. As I write this, our staff is recovering from a busy Erie County Earth Science Day that welcomed 700 guests on Saturday, October 5. I thank our sponsors and exhibitors, too numerous to list here (you can find them here: penndixie.org/earth-science-day), for making this another successful event – our 22nd – in the long history of Earth Science Days. Suffice to say, it was a team effort and everyone worked hard to pull the day together. Even the weather cooperated! After a chilly morning, we had the best afternoon weather for this event in recent memory.

Unfortunately, Jack Frost will be here before too long and we will wrap our 24th season on October 20. A few groups have tours scheduled the following week, but that’s it. Members, of course, may visit at any time – even over winter. If you do visit, please bring your card with you and use the sign-in box located on the gate. I might not have mentioned it earlier, but we now have security cameras on site. We use the sign-in form at the gate to verify those who appear on camera. If we cannot identify the person(s) on camera, we add the images to our security database and will notify law enforcement if necessary.

Our longtime volunteers and staff have horror stories that go beyond trespassing and minor vandalism issues. Thanks to our vigilance and the help of law enforcement, Penn Dixie is much safer than it was in the 1990s and 2000s. As you know, we are an incredibly unique park. How many former quarries welcome thousands of visitors each year? We want all of our guests to be safe and also want to preserve our fossils and wildlife for future generations. If you see something odd while visiting, please let me know so we can investigate. With your help, we can ensure that Penn Dixie remains open for many years to come.

Speak of oddities: I’ve been honored to be selected as one of six speakers at TEDx Buffalo this fall! My talk will focus on trilobites, our famous fossil, and will examine global extinction through the lens of another famous and ubiquitous animal: the cockroach. As a bonus, Penn Dixie will have a table at the event to share our mission with 400 of Buffalo’s science and technology enthusiasts. Plus, the video of the talk will live in YouTube infamy to hopefully get future generations of folks excited about fossil collecting – and thinking about extinction.

Our big fundraising gala, Hops ‘N Rocks, follows two weeks later on Thursday, November 7. Join us on the 3rd floor at Pearl Street from 6 to 9 pm for dinner, auctions, prizes, music, and much more! We’ve got some great prizes already, including an autographed Thurman Thomas jersey. We’ll have some exciting news to share, as well. Tickets are available on our website or you can email me (phil@penndixie.org) and, in the words of Educator Matt Wheaton, “we’ll hook you up.” I hope to see you there!

Dr. Phil
Educator’s Note

Ahhhh...the cool breezes have started to blow at Penn Dixie. My favorite time of year is here! Perfect weather to be outdoors and enjoying all that Western New York has to offer.

It as been a remarkable summer. We have had visitors from all over the world. This season, so far, we have had visitors from 47 states and over a dozen countries (including New Zealand, Ireland, and India, to name a few). We have had an absolute blast introducing these new visitors to Penn Dixie!

This summer also brought many firsts for Penn Dixie. We had a group of teachers (lead by trilobite expert Dr. Melanie Hopkins) from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, visit the site to collect fossils for their classrooms and learn about the geological history of our state.

We look forward to their return next summer. Penn Dixie also partnered with Explore & More - The Ralph C. Wilson Children’s Museum for several programs. Penn Dixie educators facilitated weekly activities within the Explore & More museum and will continue to do so through the winter. We also enjoyed partnering with Explore & More to bring our Sea of Life activity to the children’s tent at the Taste of Buffalo this past July.

But what I love the most, are the thousands of students that visit the site each year on field trips. We had a very busy spring and summer field trip season and we are preparing for our fall field trips. It is a beautiful time to come to Penn Dixie and embark on a fossil hunting adventure! For more information on site visits, to book your group visits, or anything else, please call me at (716) 627-4560 or email at holly@penndixie.org.

Holly
Director of Education

Fall 2019 Calendar
UPDATED 10/15/19

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 10 AM TO 5 PM
FINAL DAY OF SEASON
Will it rain? Snow? We never know, but those hardy folks who make it out will enjoy the last chance for the public to collect fossils at Penn Dixie. Members may visit at any time, of course, as long as they bring their card with them and sign-in using the form located inside the box at our gate.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 6 TO 9 PM
HOPS ‘N ROCKS FUNDRAISER
Join us at Pearl Street Grill & Brewery on 76 Pearl Street in downtown Buffalo for a festive fundraiser in support of Penn Dixie. We’ll have dinner, drinks, auctions, prizes, music, and more!

This is also our annual membership meeting and we will share some exciting Penn Dixie news with our attendees.

Tickets are $40/presale; $50/at the door. Tables of 10 are available for $350. Please note that tickets are electronic and will not be mailed. We will have your name on our guest list at the door — simply arrive and say ‘hello’

Purchase tickets: penndixie.org/hopsnrocks

SATURDAY, MAY 16 AND
SUNDAY MAY 17, 2020
DIG WITH THE EXPERTS
Join us for our signature fossil dig! This is our very popular, once yearly opportunity to unearth the best, most complete, and most unexpected fossils at Penn Dixie. We’ll have equipment do the heavy lifting and scientific experts on site to help with locating and identifying the best fossils. You’ll have to do your share of splitting and digging, of course, but you’re guaranteed to find something cool and interesting.

Tickets on sale January 2020.
Full info: penndixie.org/dig-with-the-experts
Buffalo Niagara Teen Science Cafe Leadership Training

By Elizabeth Schiavoni, Development Manager

The start of the school year means the start of Buffalo Niagara Teen Science Cafe at the Frank E. Merriweather Jr. Library in Buffalo. Teens from Buffalo and surrounding towns that participated in September’s Teen Leadership Training learned about planning Teen Science Cafes and voted on this school year’s topics for the program.

Yolanda Wang, age 15, wants to learn more about DNA and biotechnology. As a leader she wants to make sure “everyone feels welcome at Teen Science Cafe.”

Ahvionce Williams, age 13 and Aniyiah Harris, age 16, want to learn more about fungi and bacteria in food production and what makes microbes “good” or “bad.” Ahvionce said she learned a lot while the group discussed narrowing down the broad topic of “good” microbes to making cheese, which Aniyiah loves.

Demetrianna Thomas, age 15, wants to learn more about trees. Teens who participated in Teen Science Cafe last school year, were very interested in the environment and climate change. Several teens came to cafes after committing to learning more about climate change at the Western New York Youth Climate Summit.

Teens left the training enthusiastic about exploring these topics with local scientists and spreading the word about the program. Teen Science Cafes are free out-of-school social programs where teens explore advances in science and technology affecting their lives through activities and conversations with experts.

The National Teen Science Cafe Network is supported by the National Science Foundation and facilitated by Penn Dixie Fossil Park and Nature Reserve in Western New York.

Interested teens, parents, or scientists can contact elizabeth@penndixie.org to learn more about getting involved.

Left to right: Yolanda Wang, age 15, Ahvionce Williams, age 13, Aniyiah Harris, age 16, Demetrianna Thomas, age 15

Erie County Earth Science Day 2019
CONSTITLATION

Piuces: The Fish

By Rich Switzer

The Greeks recognized the two fish as Aphrodite and her son Eros. The Romans named them Venus and Cupid. The story goes that as they were fleeing from the Giant Typhon, they jumped into a stream and turned themselves into fish – and swam away to safety. They tied their tails together with a piece of string so they would never be separated again.

WHAT TO VIEW:
The bright, binary star Eta marks the knot that ties the two fish together. The circlet of faint stars beneath Pegasus makes up one of the fish’s heads. There are no star clusters of nebulae to discover, but one deep sky object – M174 – a spiral galaxy is located northeast of Piscium.