

**Women In Natural Sciences (WINS)** is an innovative and successful science enrichment program conducted by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University in collaboration with the School District of Philadelphia. Since its founding in 1982, WINS has been providing female public school students with hands-on science classes, scientific literacy and skill-building activities, and opportunities for personal growth in a uniquely nurturing setting.

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Manna-Symone Middlebrooks

# WINS Newsletter

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## Of bugs, science and WINS

After offering a cordial handshake and a somewhat confident smile at the end of my WINS interview, I remember Ms. Betsy saying, "If you get in, when I'm through with you, you are going to love science." I recall myself silently wishing her luck on her latest endeavor as I walked out of the building that would soon become a second home.

Like prey avoids its predator, I avoided gaining anything other than a foundational understanding of science for most of my educational career. However, this idea was not something that was tolerated in the WINS program. We were not allowed to exist in our comfort zones, so I had to force myself to be more open than usual. In every activity I was challenged to get down and dirty with science whether that be in a waste facility where the air was thick with the smell of burning garbage or in the classroom, being introduced to hissing



Manna-Symone Middlebrooks, turtle in hand, exploring the wetlands in her first year in WINS, while Priya Smythe looks over her shoulder.

cockroaches for the first time. With every new experience, I had to remind myself that there is a reason for everything and that hiking for hours, traveling miles down the Delaware river

in the pouring rain, and losing my shoe in the mud would all create a better me in the long run.

I also had to remember that I was not in this experience alone. There were girls around me who were doing some of these things for the first time and were more terrified than me. I have never been one to voluntarily show my emotions, so instead of communicating my fears I became a shoulder for the other girls to lean on and help them through their challenges. This not only allowed me to build relationships, but also helped me to realize my ability to be a leader. I am now one of the first people to volunteer to try something in activities, especially when others are apprehensive. I feel an obligation, mostly to girls younger than me, to show them that it's okay to try new things and it's even better to be open. I think that my open-mindedness masked some of my apprehensions. However, it is because of that I have been able to soak in all of the knowledge and experience given to me. So when I was offered a job at the Academy, I was terrified and overjoyed that I would be able to learn new things and teach others at the same time.

Working in Outside-In has made me look at the sciences in a new light. Handling and presenting various mammals, reptiles, scorpions, tarantulas, and other insects was never something I imagined myself doing. Now, it has become a second nature. I can proudly go on for hours about any of the animals in Outside-In and why they are vital to our lives as we know them, especially the bugs. Entomology now has a special place in my heart and I hope that I can find opportunities in college to further my understanding of bugs and their awesomeness. I am truly grateful to be surrounded by such intelligent, caring, and genuine minds as Karen, Jen, Amy, and Sean. If it were not for them, I don't think I would feel such a strong connection with my environment and its wildlife. They have all supported and challenged me in learning the ropes of the exhibit to the point where I am treated as a manager and equal mind. I always feel like my opinion and ideas are valued especially when I am asked for my support in designing lesson plans, exhibit additions, or

## Life after WINS

Everything I needed to know in life I learned at WINS! Since “Life After WINS” Alumnae panel, I have continued to reflect on my time as a WINS girl.

One particular WINS activity I remember involved a lesson in learning to use a compass. I spent a half hour with my class learning to use a compass, which we would soon have to use and find our way out of the woods. At that time, I remember thinking - “This is going to be hard! How can they expect me to do this?” Well ladies, it is safe to say I made it out alive and in the midst became a stronger person for it.

While, I had these streams of thoughts of worry and angst, looking back I learned to be fearless, flexible, open minded, developed communication skills, learned to work in a team and navigate some “foreign terrain”. Our team had to learn to make decisions, develop trust in one another, and confidence that we would be able to utilize the skills taught to us just a half hour ago to get all of us safely out of the woods and to our next appointed destination.

I say all this in the hope that you can connect with and realize that similar to the exercise, in life (after WINS) we begin at point A and have to make it to point B. We will experience obstacles that turn us around, several times even, and are given different variables, such as

people, places, and other things in life we may encounter. We can continue to use the skills developed in our WINS activities such as team work, flexibility, communication, etc. to overcome and achieve the goals we have set outside of the classroom. Thus our compass in life, WINS, can help you to get from point A to point B if you let it! No matter the activity given before you as a WINS girl, treat each lesson as a learning tool, first to be taught in the science room, then to branch out into other areas in life.

I am a firm believer that science is everywhere and in everything we do, no matter what discipline. So while on that day I might have been learning how to use a compass in the woods, I was also learning how to navigate my way through life.

Ebony Gardner LSW, WINS Class of 2003



Ebony Gardner, class of 2003, (on right) speaking at the “Life After WINS” Alumnae Panel in March 2013. Next to her are Chalón Downs, class of 1995, and Kenesta Mack, class of 1983. Monica Au-Yeung, class of 2008, came in through SKYPE.

### Junio

- 12th - Aneesah Ford-Smith
- 12th - Tiffany Neely
- 20th - Mahogany Davison
- 26th - Brianna Austin

### Julio

- 1st - Janelle Perry
- 14th - Jasmin Gilliam
- 22nd - Deneisha Cook
- 23rd - Angela Henley
- 31st - Madeline Johnson

### Agosto

- 2nd - Kiambi Bruce
- 3rd - Mary-Janet Kamagate
- 4th - Tenzin Chemi
- 6th - Aurora Ryan
- 6th - Alexis Ryan
- 8th - Danielle Williams
- 12th - Jiciana Knight
- 18th - Rayna Green



## Of bugs, science and WINS (cont.)

even handling large groups. The main goal of the exhibit is help visitors realize that natural science is not only all around you, but not as scary, and more important than you may think.



Manna pinning butterflies during the WINS Safari Overnight of 2012

Every day I walk into that exhibit I make it my personal goal to help at least one visitor make that realization. By doing this I am able to make science more relevant to me, my life, my surroundings, and to others.

Understanding science has been instrumental in my educational career. Because of my participation in the WINS Program, I have found my place in the scientific field: science education. I have real-

ized that my strengths are in learning and then finding interesting ways of communicating my new found knowledge with others. The challenges that I face exist only to create new stories for others to learn and grow from. I am proud to have developed into an instrument for others to use for success.

I would also like to congratulate Ms. Betsy in accomplishing her goal. As the final days of my time as a WINS commence, I can honestly say that I do love science and am thankful for the impact that it has had on my life. With that said, I am a hybrid who loves experiential learning, whether in a science lab or on a stage. I will be continuing my academic career at American University in the fall studying Film and Media Arts and Theater keeping in mind the scientific skills I have learned from my time at the Academy. I have been blessed to have the opportunity to stay true to my artistic self and embrace my scientific one as well with this program. For that, I am truly grateful and will carry everyone and everything that I have learned with me for the rest of my life.

Manna-Symone Middlebrooks, WINS II

## My WINS experience

Being here on the Delaware Aquatic Center trip makes me feel good. Despite the very wet weather I've enjoyed it so far. Being in nature and actually soaking in the scenery and taking in the soothing sounds it brings upon you. Looking at this scenery makes me look into my life and what I can do with it. I could have Ms. Betsy's job or Ms. Allie's job. I could even own this entire center.

Every WINS trip I go on leads my mind down more and more unlocked doors in which my life can go through. I am astonished to have such an experience. Being a WINS girl is truly an honor and will always be a part of my life.

WINS isn't only about learning about science and doing experiments and workshops; it's also about making friends who could maybe be in your life forever. You also learn presentation skills and different ways to solve problems whether small, large, or even global in nature. At times you may be feeling a little down and there is no doubt that there is always someone who can cheer you up.

WINS is an all-in-one package of happiness, friendship, and learning. Along with those factors there are so many great op-

portunities. You get a chance to go to so many great places. If it weren't for WINS maybe you would have never have come across these places in your lifetime. You might find a new topic or idea that greatly interests you or even a career you can someday see yourself in.

Also, you could even see how a career that interests you links to something else that you never heard of before. But being in WINS opened up a door that gave you an opportunity to discover that. I always like to think that everything happens for a reason and being in WINS can help me expand and further in life.

Jada Parris, WINS I



Jada Parris exploring during a hike down Lighthouse road in Delaware.



**THE ACADEMY  
OF NATURAL SCIENCES**

of DREXEL UNIVERSITY

1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway  
Philadelphia, PA 19103



*Dates to  
Remember...*

**WELCOME NEW WINS I**

You will get a final schedule your first day of class, but mark down these dates!!

Monday, July 1st: **First Day!**

Academy of Natural Sciences  
10:00am to 3:00pm

August 12th to 16th: **Trip to Poconos  
Environmental Education Center**



**WINS II**

Tuesday, June 25th: **Field Trip!**

**Fossil hunting in Inversand, NJ.**

Meet at the Academy at 8:30am, back  
by 3:30pm

Thursday and Friday, June 27th & 28th:

**Customer Service Training**

MANDATORY FOR ALL Explainers and  
Interns, ANSP 9:30am to 4:00pm

Thursday, July 11th: **Field trip! TBD**

Tuesday, August 27th: **Field Trip!**

**USDA presentations & Johnson**

**House Historic Site (Underground  
Station and Museum).** Meet at ANSP

9:30am, back by 3:30pm

Thursday, August 29th: **Field Trip!**

**Drexel University tour & STAR pro-  
gram presentation** . Meet *at the Drexel*

*University's Bossone Building* at Market  
Street between 31st and 32nd Streets at  
9:45am, back by 3:30pm

**WINS Newsletter**

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All activities are  
**rain or shine!**

Please let  
Ms. Betsy know  
if you cannot  
make it to an  
activity  
beforehand.