





Sommers observes wildlife with some of her students.



Seventh-graders at Galloway Township Middle School enjoy the outdoor classroom.

#### NATURE FEST

The team also started Nature Fest, an annual event launched in 2011, in which students select a topic that interests them. The topics must be about South Jersey ecosystems or organisms that would be found in those ecosystems, or important environmental issues. Students then conduct research and put together a lesson to be taught to the visitors. Students use backboards to display facts, provide hands-on materials or actual organisms, play games, and other activities to teach their information to the visitors.

They also invite professional organizations to teach and display facts from their organization. Some of the organizations that have participated over the years are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge, Go Green Galloway, N.J. Forest Fire, Atlantic County Utilities Authority, Stockton University, and others.

More than 800 visitors, including kindergarten through eighth-grade students, parents and invited guests, rotate through the presentations. These presentations are anything but dull.

GTMS students Rilyn and Vivian set up a “battle” between the gray squirrel and the Eastern chipmunk to educate people about their strengths and differences.

“Kids don’t want to hear a boring presentation of facts,” Rilyn said. “We turned it into a battle because kids like roasting and teasing each other.”

GETTING BACK TO **n e** IN

