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Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991, is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Friends and Family everywhere
From: Cheri and Raven Hill
Date: September 17, 2022
Re: **Stone circles—not just a pile of rocks!**

Greetings to Everyone!

Several stone circles exist at Raven Hill Discovery Center. While the most well known is the Center’s version of Stonehenge, several other stone circles can be seen at Raven Hill. From small stones laid up around the fire circle for safety to the labyrinth to the

newest stone circle on the Connections Trail, the image of the stone circle is one that many consider a sacred space.



This week, another station was added to the new Connections Trail. Thanks to a grant award from Bay Harbor Foundation and expert work by Hellebuyck Masonry, visitors now have a place to rest and relax for a few minutes.



During the Neolithic Age, about 5000 years ago, the ancients used their ingenuity to create stone circles. Stonehenge in England was built in several phases spanning about 1500 years. Here at Raven Hill, our stone circle was finished in two days. On Thursday, a 20’ diameter cement circle was poured. On Friday, using heavy equipment, fieldstones were set in place to form a special place for rest and reflection.



Raven Hill’s Stonehenge, the Stone Circle in our Ancient World, was laid out to the size of the actual Stonehenge, using local fieldstones to represent the bluestones. The Center’s Stonehenge even includes the inner horseshoe of bluestones and altar of limestone.

Stone circles are found all over the world, with most found in Europe. Many are solar and lunar observatories with a significant knowledge of astronomy, engineering, and geometry needed to build these early monuments. Other stone circles may have been ceremonial or for worship and healing. It’s also possible that stone circles were local gathering places, as Raven Hill’s new stone circle is designed to be.

In some places occupied by the American Indians and Inuit peoples, as well as in Lapland and Siberia, “tent rings” have been found. Stephen Childs in his book, **Stone Circles Explained** says, “It was not uncommon for the lower edges of the hide walls of temporary homes to be pinned to the ground by a circle of boulders, which were rolled back and left in place, when the hunters moved on. Some of these tent rings were reoccupied annually and stayed in place for centuries. Sometimes, there is a small central circle of hearthstones. Maybe a tent circle will be the next stone circle we replicate at Raven Hill. We already have a hearth of sorts with our fire circle!



In 2019, the campfire site was added. The rocks piled around the outside of the fire circle keep the little ones from getting too close to the flames. Located behind the Schoolhouse, the fire circle provides warmth and a gathering place.



During the summer of 2004, Raven Hill built a 7 circuit labyrinth. Laid out in a classical pattern with a sitting stone in the center, young summer visitors helped build the labyrinth. For several summers thereafter, the kids would bring larger rocks from home to replace the small ones that we had to use to finish outlining the pathway! We would always have a little ceremony—retiring the small rocks and replacing them with the larger ones!

Labyrinths are unique in that they are a geometric shape that does not occur naturally. Many labyrinths are circular in shape. They date back 4000 years or more. The first recorded labyrinth is found in Egypt. In the 5th century BCE (formerly BC), the Greek historian, Herodotus, wrote that "all the works and buildings of the Greeks put together would certainly be inferior to this labyrinth as regards labor and expense." Labyrinths are often used to encourage the body and mind into a state of calm, where one can discover an inner peace.

There are two kinds of labyrinths, but both are circuitous pathways. A **maze** has multiple paths, forcing the traveler to choose one over another, some of which may be dead ends, while others double back, so there is no assurance that the goal will be reached. A **meander** is the second version of labyrinth and the sort found at Raven Hill. This type has a single path with no choices. Often, there is a sitting rock at the center of a meandering labyrinth.

Labyrinths have been used for walking meditation, dance, rituals and ceremonies. In the Middle Ages, walking a cathedral labyrinth was a substitute for going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Not everyone could make the long journey to the Holy Land, so walking a labyrinth in a church was a devotional activity. Today meandering labyrinths are often used as walking meditations, to focus the mind and put the walker in tune with the universe.

Fall hours are now in effect. Raven Hill is open weekends—noon to 4pm on Saturdays; 2pm to 4pm on Sundays and any other time by appointment. Throughout the fall, winter & early spring, teaching and learning continues onsite at Raven Hill and through our outreach programs. Call 231.536.3369 or email info@miravenhill.org to book a science, history or art lesson for your children or the whole family, schedule a field trip for your classroom, arrange for an outreach program at your location or reserve the **History Heritage & STEAM** traveling exhibit for your school or public library. Also, remember that the Center is a perfect place for scout and 4H activities, birthday parties for all ages, retreats, weddings and other gatherings.



These kids are following the circular path to the sitting stone found in the center at the end of the pathway. Raven Hill's labyrinth can be found on the World-Wide Labyrinth Locator and is 35' in diameter.

Come visit soon,

Cheri



A wishing stone has a single unbroken stripe all the way around the rock. This one is part of our new stone circle. It is too big to keep in your pocket, but it is just as good for making wishes as any small wishing stone you might find. Look for this special rock the next time you walk the Connections Trail. Check it out in the new stone circle.