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Two photos attached

Nine-Year-Old boy Finds Rare Trilobite Nest on Fresh Air Family Fossil Hunt

Sumiton, Ala. – It was a surprise outing for Isaac Dollar and his brothers on Saturday – his mother would not reveal their destination. The three excited boys never guessed they would join a Fresh Air Family fossil hunt at a world-class site, much less find a museum-quality fossil.

Nine-year-old Isaac persisted in searching through the rocks and shale until he found some unusual bumps on a single slab. As it turns out, he found a rare nest of Trilobites. These two-inch fossils record the life of one of the first known arthropods that lived in Alabama 300 million years ago.

“Did I have fun? What do you think? YEAH,” said Dollar, beaming over his precious find.

Isaac wasn’t the only successful family fossil hunter, his brother, 11-year-old Luke found a *Diplichnites gouldi* track, which scientists believe were made by were made by a fish “walking” in shallow water on pectoral or ventral fin spines.

The boys joined a group of nearly 100 Fresh Air Family participants, who came in two sessions, to hunt fossils at the Steven C. Minkin Paleozoic Footprint Site. The hunt was sponsored by First Federal Credit Union’s Kids 1st Club. This former strip mine was preserved by an Act of Congress (preventing its reclamation as a strip mine) after its rare fossils were discovered by a high school science teacher from Oneonta. The site has been named the most important Coal Age fossil site in the world by scientists.

“We are thrilled to see so many families working together, having fun, and learning exciting new information about Alabama’s ancient past,” said Verna Gates, Founder and Executive Director of Fresh Air Family, who organized the trip.

One mother and son team found three different horseshoe crab tracks, the animal that made the site is famous. The UCM is the only fossil site in the world to preserve a complete record of the life-cycle of the ancient horseshoe crab.

One family found an Attenosaurus track, the size of a human hand, which belonged to a large reptile. Several Cincosaurus tracks were also found, which measured the size of a quarter. Both reptiles resembled modern lizards.

Jim Fanning and his son, Will, found a large imprint of a fern. The two worked for over an hour to extract the large piece in order to take it home.

“I wasn’t thrilled about coming, but now that I know how much fun it is, I want to tell my principal so my school can come,” said Will Fanning, age 12, of Dora.

Mike Scott, a frequent fossil hunter, got his start coming to a Fresh Air Family fossil hunt six years ago. He brought his daughter six months after his wife died, to have something to do together.

“Now, I drive my daughter crazy. I can spot a rock and hit the brakes to see what’s in it. I am a true rock hound now,” Scott said, while helping other families find fossils.

Fresh Air Family paleontologist Carl Sloan examined all of the finds and was pleased with the amateur crowd of hunters. He took the trilobite find to examine it more closely before either returning it to the Dollar family or turning it over to a museum.

About Fresh Air Family

Fresh Air Family is a 501c3 non-profit organization that offers more than 400 outdoor education activities per year, including 15 summer camp programs. Signature activities include: Prepared, Not Scared Camp, award-winning Gross Out Camp, Hikes for Tykes and serving as the activity arm of Scale Back Alabama. www.freshairfamily.org