

# Wonders of Earth up close

Ballston Spa High School students observe springs and rock formations during tour

By **CHRISTEN DEMING**

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**SARATOGA SPRINGS** -- Ballston Spa High School students recently got a lesson in local geology at the Saratoga Spa State Park.

The group of 25 students traveled around the county to study fossils, water and more. "It's about seeing how much is right before our eyes," said high school geology teacher Dan Ling.

As part of the daylong tour, Ling led his students, all juniors and seniors, around the state park, tasting mineral springs and examining rock formations.



Ballston Spa High School senior Elizabeth Bonga, left, and geology teacher Dan Ling examine a fossil found at Rock City Falls during a school field trip. (John Carl D'Annibale / Times Union)

Tasting the Polaris Spring, most students winced at the water's heavy mineral taste. "It has every metal you can name," Ling told the students. Senior Robby Benton said he enjoyed the taste of the water as he filled up his water bottle to take more to go.

Ling, a science teacher at Ballston Spa for 14 years, has taught the geology course for the past two years. He said he likes to focus on observational learning to supplement his in-classroom curriculum, Ling added.

After tasting some of the park's springs, the students hiked down the path that runs along the creek near the walking bridge to Saratoga Performing Arts Center. At the end of the path is a large deposit of tufa, which is a geologic rock formation of calcium carbonate. Ling pointed out to his students the leaves that were slowly becoming fossils in the tufa.

"It was interesting that we had all this tufa," said senior Dan Karkotsky. "I've never heard of it before."

Other stops on the trip included Rock City Falls to study fossils, Lester Park to observe stromatolite formations and Stark's Knob in Northumberland to look at a 120-foot-tall igneous rock formation.

For Ling, this was another opportunity to show them how geology in the classroom can be experienced firsthand. "This is where they grew up, but stuff they never knew," he said.

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