



Ken Burget (far left) and Kathy Boyles (far right) presented the Superior FFA Chapter with two GPS units to recognize the Chapter's volunteer work. The FFA Chapter won the Nebraska Earth Team Group Award for FY06.

## Nebraska FFA Chapter Creates Conservation Reports for Radio

By Kathy Boyles, Soil Conservation Technician & Joanna Pope, State Volunteer Coordinator

The Superior, Neb., FFA Chapter volunteered for the five NRCS field offices within the Little Blue Natural Resources District. The FFA Chapter has been recording "conservation reports" that air on a local radio station for the past three years. The conservation reports provide NRCS program information to farmers and ranchers in southeast Nebraska.

The assistance received from these volunteers was helpful to NRCS. Employees had more time to work on other projects and assist producers while still getting pertinent information about NRCS programs out to the public.

NRCS offices within the Little Blue Natural Resources

District have seen an increase in producer interest and public awareness of the programs available through NRCS. These students' efforts increased the general public's awareness of natural resource concerns, while they have learned more about natural resource concerns themselves.

To recognize them for their assistance, Kathy Boyles, Soil Conservation Technician in the Nelson Field Office, nominated the Superior FFA Chapter for a Nebraska Earth Team award, which the Chapter ended up winning. Recently Boyles and Ken Burgert, Resource Conservationist in the Nelson Field Office, presented the FFA Chapter with two GPS units and a plaque at a ceremony at the Superior high school. The GPS units will be used in the classroom and lab to help students learn about technology used in agriculture.

## Earth Team Success from the Voice of a Volunteer

By Stephanie Cole

I became an Earth Team volunteer because I wanted to transfer my passion for the environment into efforts that would make a difference. I met Jan Klaus, of the Hays, KS Area Office, at Fort Hays State University. Jan was very friendly to me, gave me useful

information and asked me how I would be interested in volunteering. Looking back on the experience, I feel that this was an important part of building a future relationship. I told Jan that I would be interested in public relations activities, writing and office duties.

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"The Earth Team volunteer program has fostered my passion for conservation."

-Stephanie Cole  
Kansas Earth Team Volunteer

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## Volunteers Lead Farming Discussion Teaching Assistance in Stilwell

*By Susan Henning, Earth Team Volunteer*

USDA agencies, conservation districts, Oklahoma State University Extension, and the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council partnered to bring a seminar entitled, "Farm Survival with Alternative Tillage and Crops" to more than 150 area farmers in Ponca City, Oklahoma, on Feb. 6, 2007.

The evening began with a meal sponsored by ConocoPhillips and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. The heart of the seminar was led by four Earth Team Volunteer panelists and NRCS Soil Scientist, Greg Scott. Each local Kay and Noble County producer explained their farming operation in relation to tillage practices and rotational crops; their successes and failures. The audience asked questions about how the current drought has affected no-till practices and the use of soil moisture by cover crops. The panelists emphasized keeping the soil healthy and reestablishing the soil structure after years of conventional tillage and including rotational crops to reduce weed, insect, and disease problems. All panelists also included livestock grazing of no-tilled crops, especially wheat. The evening concluded with a presentation by a Rural Development Specialist, on Value-Added Crops.

*By Andrew Inman, District Conservationist*

Jennifer Bowen and Kayla Latta have volunteered at the Stilwell Field Office for about one year. Latta has volunteered 942 hours and Bowen has volunteered 66 hours.

Kayla assisted in the Emergency Conservation Program, filing and putting together plans. Jennifer and Kayla organized all of the plans in the Stilwell office, participated in educating children about water quality, helped sign-in contestants at the tractor driving competition, aided judges with the Adair County Fair, and performed daily office duties.



**Jennifer Bowen, Adair County Earth Team Volunteer, teaches students about water quality and conservation.**

### **Cole, from page 1**

Giving volunteers the opportunity to utilize their best skills and be involved in a way that is appealing to them is probably why Kansas is among the leading states in volunteer hours.

Other volunteers may prefer to work in the field and would become bored in the office. However, the NRCS system places volunteers in areas where they will be the happiest and the most productive, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship for everyone.

My time at NRCS has been a learning experience in several ways. I gained knowledge about NRCS, and learned how individuals can help protect our natural resources. Furthermore, I have been involved in several volunteer opportunities that allowed me to contribute to the conservation mission. One of my first volunteer assignments was to produce a press release about an NRCS program that would provide payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources and identify and reward those farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their operations.



**Stephanie Cole**

A few months after producing this article, I was given the opportunity to do an internship at The Conservancy of Southwest Florida, and I became involved in promoting a program that was similar to the program I had written about for the NRCS. Not only did I use information I learned from NRCS to make my internship a success, but I'm confident my experience at NRCS helped me obtain the position, which allowed me to further my involvement and contributions in environmental conservation. Although my internship was not with NRCS, it was for an organization that has a conservation-based mission, which is what the Earth Team volunteer program is all about.

In conclusion, my time as an Earth Team volunteer has been very educational, enjoyable and productive. Since my internship with The Conservancy, I have continued as an Earth Team volunteer. The program has allowed me to build friendships, practice skills that are directly related to my educational goals and most importantly, the Earth Team volunteer program has fostered my passion for conservation.



# 2006 National Earth Team Employee of the Year

## Tree planting, bluebird box project lead to national recognition

By Patricia H. Hoeffken, Arkansas State Volunteer Coordinator

J. Sidney Lowrance is the National Earth Team NRCS Employee of the Year for 2006. In 2006, Lowrance, District Conservationist at Marshall, Arkansas, and his team of volunteers built and distributed 125 Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes. They also distributed 37,000 tree seedlings in Searcy County. Groups of volunteers contributed 2,142 volunteer hours in completing both projects.



Many of the tree seedlings were planted along fence rows, roads, and around houses and barns. This helps grow windbreaks, increase wildlife habitat, and improve the beauty of the area. Trees also prevent erosion, provide nesting sites, and purify the air. "In today's world a very important factor for planting trees is global warming," said Lowrance. "If left unchecked, this trend will have dire consequences for Arkansas and the world." The project reached out to 95 families, every fifth grade student in the Leslie, Marshall and Saint Joe Schools, and members of the Jasper FFA.

"I recruit environmentally conscious volunteer group leaders who locate volunteers to plant the trees and install the nesting boxes," said Lowrance.

Nesting sites of the Eastern Bluebird are compromised due to urban sprawl, metal fence posts replacing wooden fence posts, and brush removal on ranches, farms and parks. "Youths, school classes, church groups, 4-H clubs,

and Marshall and St. Joe FFA chapters assembled the boxes and carried a few home to install. They gained experience in building the nesting boxes and in planting trees. There is great community support for these programs," said Lowrance. The group has built and distributed more than 425 Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes since 2004.

"Volunteers play a vital role in achieving our conservation efforts in Searcy County," he said, "Without them the success we obtained would be far more minimal.

Volunteer group leaders are Ricky Reed, soil conservation technician, Wendy Hendrix, soil conservation technician, Janie McEntire, Buffalo Conservation District secretary, and Bill McEntire, Earth Team volunteer.

For more information about the Eastern Bluebird nesting boxes and tree seedlings planting programs contact Lowrance at (870) 448-3184, extension 3.

## Archeologist Digs Earth Team

By Georgia Sormun

Washington State Earth Team Coordinator

Robert "Bob" Sloma has volunteered more than 150 hours to the Earth Team over the past three years. Bob is one of NRCS' first fully qualified volunteer Cultural Resource Specialist (CRS). If he were a federal employee, Bob would qualify in the archeologist (GS-0193) and historian (GS-0170) series. He brings a GS-11/12 level of talent and more than 17 years of experience to help our cause.

Like most archeologists, Bob became familiar with NRCS through county soil surveys. Since then, he has volunteered to teach hundreds of sixth graders about Addison County's significant resources. Bob

### Washington

has contributed time for NRCS Washington's Cultural Resource Training, public outreach at the Northwest Anthropology Conference and Washington Archaeology Month, and cultural resource survey on EQIP and WRP projects

His favorite discoveries in Washington include megafauna and an odd assemblage of artifacts identified by Courtney Smith in Garfield County and working with the soil survey party near a National Register eligible homestead. His least favorite finds are ticks! Other more intangible goals clearly reflect his passion for stewarding the nation's significant sites.



**Robert Sloma receives a certificate of appreciation from State Conservationist Gus Houghbanks.**

"I get to see how NRCS operates and treats cultural resources, how the agency approaches its federally legislated CRM tasks, and work with field offices," said Sloma.

## Anderson County Landowner Protects Water Quality

By Matthew Denton, District Conservationist

Donley and Eunice Hill own a thirty-eight acre farm that runs along the Clinch River in Anderson County. Donley recently retired from the United States Forest Service with the National Forest in North Carolina. His wife, Eunice, is a librarian with Norris Middle School in Anderson County. They are both avid supporters of soil and water conservation and as good stewards of the environment, they knew that the process of establishing and/or maintaining a livestock operation while keeping the potentially harmful effects of production at a minimum would be especially arduous.

With these issues in mind, the Hills contacted the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Anderson County Soil Conservation District (SCD) in Clinton for technical assistance with several conservation, wildlife habitat, and production concerns. Due to the constant fluctuation in water level and flow of the Clinch River when Norris Dam is generating, the banks of the river were eroding severely.

To stabilize the areas of concern, a variety of riparian and wildlife friendly species were planted by Earth Team Volunteers from Clinton High School along the banks of the river and the tributary. Eight Clinton High School Agriculture students, their teacher, David Rogers, NRCS, and Anderson County SCD logged forty-five hours of volunteer service on this task. There were approximately 1000 trees and shrubs planted totaling one and one half miles of riparian area including: loblolly and white pine, sawtooth and nuttall oak, flowering dogwood, hawthorne, indigobush, sycamore, and sugarberry. Some of these trees and shrubs were chosen for their extensive root systems, others for their benefits to wildlife, erosion control, and aesthetic value.



Pictured are Donley Hill, Anderson County landowner, and Matthew Denton, NRCS District Conservationist, with eight Earth Team volunteers and David Rogers, advisor from Clinton High School after completing the riparian area tree planting.

Another concern of the Hills was cattle access to the river and creek. Knowing the possibility of detrimental effects to water quality from prolonged livestock exposure, NRCS and Anderson County SCD recommended exclusion fencing which has been installed along the tributary and the Clinch River. More than one mile of woven-wire fencing was installed. They are in the process of installing additional streambank stabilization utilizing cedar tree revetments, cross-fencing to promote a rotational grazing system, and automatic watering facilities in strategic places to provide water to their cattle due to exclusion of the animals from the creek and river.

## Wisconsin Soil Scientist Gives Knowledge, Enthusiasm to Earth Team

By Betty Stibbe

*Wisconsin State Earth Team Coordinator*  
As a retired soil scientist, Jim Barnes continues to play an instrumental role in sharing his love of soil science with numerous students, teachers, farmers and landowners by volunteering.

Jim volunteered to bring the World of Soil Science to a group of third and fourth graders from Antigo, Wisconsin. He visited with the students on numerous occasions to teach them the basics of soil and its significance to

everyone. He even guided the students and teachers to the school district's forest to show them a soil profile of Antigo Silt Loam (Wisconsin's State Soil) and explained its various components.

Jim also gives soil presentations to grade school youth. He displayed his enthusiasm for soil science at the NRCS soil pit at Farm Technology Days and

-----See Barnes, page 5





# High School Students Plant Trees for Elk Valley Landowner

*By Matthew Denton, District Conservationist*

Campbell County High School, the Campbell County Soil Conservation District, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) recently worked with Bill and Ann Lowe in the Elk Valley community to plant trees in conjunction with the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) on their property. The students served as Earth Team Volunteers and installed a one acre hedgerow with Sawtooth Oak, Persimmon, and Dogwood species. They also planted a tree and shrub field border with hard and soft mast species. All of the planting was completed by hand. The students were trained on the correct procedure for planting bare root seedlings. Nearly 80 hours of Earth Team volunteer service was provided.

William and Ann Lowe have a unique situation for wildlife habitat. They have Wild Turkey, Whitetail Deer, Bobwhite Quail, Grouse, Fox Squirrel, Blue Herons and Elk. The Elk migrated from their release point at a nearby Tennessee Wildlife Management Area in the winter of 2000-2001 to the Lowe farm. The Lowe's own more than 200 acres including Bill's grandparent's farm. In addition to acres set aside for wildlife habitat, Lowe maintains about thirty acres of cool season grass and legume pasture and hayland and has three horses.

The farm has a good variety of terrain and vegetative cover including: mature hardwood timber, cool season hay fields, and creek bottoms with row crop nearby, but it needed some improvements to the habitat especially small game cover, water availability, and food sources. The Lowes



**Pictured from left to right BACK ROW Bill Grieve, Campbell County H.S. Teacher, Anthony Petrey, Brooke Bunch, Josh Shaw, Bryan Anderson, Justin Low, Bill Lowe, Ray Roark, Matthew Denton, FRONT ROW Whitney Bunch, Ann Lowe, Brian Holt, Nathaniel Leach, Brandon Hatmaker, Albert Cox, Derek Seiber**

contacted the USDA-NRCS Service Center in Clinton, TN and Matthew Denton, District Conservationist and Robin Mayberry, Area 3 Wildlife Biologist met with them on the farm. They determined what practices would positively affect wildlife habitat and discussed the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

## Barnes, from page 4-----

NRCS booth at the Wisconsin Science Teacher's convention. Everyone fortunate enough to work with Jim remembers his energy when he talks about soils.

Jim's volunteer work fits very well with the mission of NRCS. He has been involved with soil science for more than 30 years. Jim's services allowed soil survey staff to achieve their accelerated goals to complete the initial soil survey in Wisconsin, as well as have the data submitted to the soil data mart by the time of the Year of the Soil Celebration. With his help, the Year of the Soil

Celebration, Farm Technology Days and Science Teachers convention were a huge success reaching out to thousands of people throughout the state.

Jim's work as an Earth Team Volunteer has helped bridge the gap between current employees and the volunteer program. Employees worked one-on-one with Jim to coordinate scheduled events at the Year of Soil Celebration. Jim's enthusiasm was truly motivating and helped to show the importance and the impact that the Earth Team Volunteer program could have on everyone.

## National Volunteer Week April 15-21



*Caring Is Always In Season*

# Louisiana Wins 2006 Chief's Cup Award

## Volunteers are honored at employee awards program

By Vicky Fontenot, Louisiana State Earth Team Coordinator

During the annual Louisiana NRCS Employees Awards Program, several volunteers were honored for their dedication and assistance during Fiscal Year 2006.

The Thibodaux Field Office received the 2006 Office Award. Members of NRCS and Lafourche Terrebonne District are active in several arenas. They include:

- Coastal Re-Vegetation - volunteers have assisted with 35,305 feet (more than 6.5 miles) for marsh creation/restoration, shoreline protection, and to establish vegetation on dunes in order to rebuild and prevent damage from erosion.
- Volunteers and interns from Nicholls State University and Southern University planted test sites to increase Louisiana native plant materials.
- Thibodaux Field Office and Lafourche-Terrebonne SWCD host Livestock Field Days, Annual Sugarcane Growers Field Day, LACD Annual Area IV Meeting, Grazing Land Workshop, and Annual "Voices of the Wetlands Festival." At these events, volunteers help with pamphlets distribution, taking pictures or help at booths.
- Volunteers help during the district's annual shade tree sale. They bundle and deliver the trees to customers.
- Volunteers are honored at the Annual Cooperator Appreciation Banquet and provided recognition items.
- Thibodaux Field Office, SWCD

employees and supervisors attended CWPPRA Dedication Celebration on Grand Isle. Volunteers contributed to this event.

The 2006 Group Award was presented to Shreveport Green. Lee Jeter, coordinator for Shreveport Green, and 43 of his volunteers planted 12 acres of research plots at the Calhoun Research Station in Feb '06. Jeter supervised the volunteers, making sure the seedlings were planted correctly and at the proper locations. The pine and hardwood seedlings had to be planted in specific locations in order to conduct the research.

Two outstanding volunteers earned the Individual Volunteer Award for FY 2006: Lori Partridge and Betty Yarbrough. They are both teachers of the Skills Option Program for Vernon Parish located at Lamar Salter Technical College.

The Skills Option Program, also known as the GATES program, provides a successful path for non-traditional high school students.

Partridge and Yarbrough bring three to five students nearly every Friday during the school year. In addition to numerous administrative tasks, they have built a large shelving area in the copy room to organize envelopes, toner, and drum cartridges for the copier. They detailed and washed our government-owned vehicles and organized the items for year end purchases for all field offices for easier delivery. They have also helped the Calcasieu SWCD – Leesville Field Office with their local tree sale and helped with decorating Rodeo and Christmas Parade Floats.

Partridge and Yarbrough together



Thibodaux Field Office



Louisiana Volunteers of the Year



Shreveport Green group

have given more than 170 Earth Team hours. The Skills Option Program students, which change every school year, has given more than 61 hours since January 2004.



# Alyce Simms Completes 15 Years of Earth Team Service

By *Tiffany Riess and Dave Sanden*  
California Area One Staff

Nearly 85 years young, Earth Team Volunteer Alyce Simms celebrated the end of her 15 years of service at the Red Bluff Area Office in January. NRCS Area 1 staff held a party in Simms honor.

As part of the celebration, Simms received an USDA certificate signed by California State Conservationist Ed Burton, a trophy, and a 15-year service lapel pin. Simms loves good food and cooking, and she once owned and managed her own restaurant, so she appreciated the NRCS staff's homemade entrees supplied as part of the potluck retirement party.

Born March 9, 1922, Simms served in the U.S. Women's Navy during WWII from 1942 until 1945. She retired from SRI International (formerly Stanford Research Institute) in November 1986 after 21 years as a Word Processing Supervisor. She joined the Soil Conservation Service as a volunteer in January 1991, where she first helped to create a database for forestry projects, and later helped to create and maintain databases for the NRCS Earth Team program. Simms latest volunteer work has been with Area Administrative Assistant Barbara Ammon reconciling PCMS computer transactions.



Alyce Simms

# Young Volunteer Helps NRCS and Red River District

By *Vicky Fontenot*  
Louisiana State Earth Team Coordinator

Fourteen-year old Drew Baxley from Coushatta spent part of the recent holiday break volunteering at the NRCS field office through the Earth Team. Drew assisted the NRCS and conservation district staff in conducting tree planting compliance field checks. He visited sites that NRCS provided cost-sharing for tree planting and conducted inspections including counting the number of trees planted per acre, measuring the spacing and planting depth of the seedlings as well as documenting the overall quality of the seedlings and work completed. Drew assisted in the inspection of more than 80 acres of newly established loblolly pine trees in Red River Parish!

“Volunteers are absolutely invaluable to our office as well as to the agency and local soil and water conservation district,” said NRCS District Conservationist Sarah Haymaker. “At this time of year, we really rely on individuals such as Drew to help us complete a variety of conservation jobs. It really is a win-win situation. Our volunteers gain experience working very closely with NRCS and Red River Soil and Water Conservation District personnel.”

Drew said of his experience, “It was fun. I want to do it again whenever they need me.”



Drew Baxley

# Rhode Island Volunteer Improves Trout Habitat

*By Jeanne Comerford, Rhode Island Earth Team Coordinator*

Lawson Cary is a native of western Rhode Island and a devoted naturalist, outdoorsman, and fly fisherman. He has a strong interest and passion in restoring native brook trout habitat to protect and preserve this fish species. In Rhode Island one threat to native brook trout are road and stream intersections. These intersections disrupt the continuity of river and stream ecosystems, thereby inhibiting upstream and downstream fish passage. As a result, native brook trout habitat is being degraded and brook trout populations are being reduced. As an observant naturalist, Lawson noted these problems and approached the Rhode Island Resource Conservation and Development Area Council (RI RC&D) and the USDA-NRCS with the idea to inventory road and stream crossings and to assess fish passage. With Lawson's enthusiasm and motivation, the RI River and Stream Continuity Project came into existence.



**Lawson Cary cares for trout habitat in Rhode Island.**

Lawson Cary has been a dedicated Earth Team Volunteer, inventorying stream and road crossings since November 2005. For the past one-and-a-half years, Lawson has lead volunteer groups from the Trout Unlimited-Narragansett Chapter (TU), the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association, and the USDA-NRCS in the inventory of stream crossings in both the Upper and Lower Wood River watersheds of Rhode Island. Lawson and his teams have field checked more than 290 road and stream crossings, which entails collecting data and field measurements and documenting the crossings with upstream and downstream photos. In this effort, Lawson and his TU volunteer crew alone have logged approximately 670 volunteer hours.

Lawson's eagerness and enthusiasm are contagious, and he is always willing to teach and share his knowledge of the natural world. Spend a day in the field with Lawson and he will tell you numerous stories of the changing RI landscape and of course, plenty of fly fishing stories! Show him a

picture of a stream crossing and it is guaranteed he will be able to identify the stream and road name. He is a wealth of information and has been an advisor and mentor to countless volunteers on this project; guiding, teaching, and inspiring them with his wisdom and knowledge of the brook trout's life history traits and habitat requirements.

Lawson's commitment to restoring a stable brook trout population in Rhode Island is evident from his volunteer hours and his passion for the protection and preservation of native brook trout habitat. With a deep respect for nature, Lawson's motivation for his volunteer work comes from his mission to maintain a healthy native population of brook trout for future generations of Rhode Islanders to enjoy. Lawson is the motivation and the solid foundation for the RI River and Stream Continuity Project. It is through his inspiration and knowledge of native brook trout that the project continues. Lawson, the NRCS, RI RC&D and the native brook trout greatly appreciate your efforts.

## ***Submissions to VolunteerVoice***

Articles and photos for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to [michele.eginoire@ia.usda.gov](mailto:michele.eginoire@ia.usda.gov). If you prefer, copy can be mailed or faxed to NRCS at 5140 Park Avenue, Suite C, Des Moines, IA. 50321, fax number (515) 289-4561. Please include photographs to illustrate the article. JPEG images are preferred. Slides and prints are accepted. If you are using a digital camera, remember to set the camera to the highest quality resolution. Please submit stories as Word files, and limit to one page in length. Photos need to be in JPEG or TIFF format.

Submission deadlines for 2007 editions of the VolunteerVoice are:

- Third Quarter 2007--Distribution June 2007. Deadline to submit: 6/1/07
- Fourth Quarter 2007--Distribution September 2007. Deadline to submit: 9/1/07

For information about the Earth Team and the VolunteerVoice, go to [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) or call 1-888-LANDCARE.

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