

Chief Lancaster Assists Plant Materials Center In Recognizing Earth Team Volunteer

By *Jolene Lau, State Volunteer Coordinator, Hawaii*



Chief Arlen Lancaster recognizes Kristen Coelho for her 535 hours of volunteer service this fiscal year

NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster, while touring the NRCS offices on the island of Molokai, assisted the Plant Materials Center in recognizing Kristen Coelho for volunteering 535 hours of service.

Kristen has been a tremendous asset to the Hawaii Plant Materials Center (PMC). She provided the much needed help in the implementation of many of the projects at the PMC. She is a fast learner and isn't afraid of getting her hands dirty. While at the PMC, she has had an enthusiastic outlook on learning new things. Kristen has become knowledgeable in understanding the function of the plant materials program and skilled in the operation of various specialized farm equipment.

Her job duties include assisting the PMC staff in the day to day operations of the center, which include experimental test plot installation and data collection, propagation of plant propagules, test plot maintenance, irrigation repair, weed control, crop harvesting and seed cleaning and facility and vehicle maintenance. She has also assisted in the Ka-hoolawe island re-vegetation efforts through propagation, harvesting and maintenance of native Hawaiian plants on the severely eroded island. Kristen is truly a wonderful example of an outstanding Earth Team volunteer!

Flag Recognizing Louisiana Volunteers Flown Over Nation's Capitol

By *Herb Bourque, Public Affairs Specialist, Louisiana*

An American flag honoring Louisiana Earth Team volunteers who work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Louisiana's 44 Soil and Water Conservation Districts was flown over the nation's Capitol to commemorate National Volunteer Week, April 15-21, 2007. This flag was recently framed by Vickie Fontenot, State Volunteer Coordinator, and presented to State Conservationist Don Gohmert.

"This is a special recognition truly deserved by these unsung conservationists," explained Gohmert. "During this past year in Louisiana, 546 volunteers donated over 31,000 hours to help conserve the state's natural resources through field and office work."

"We are very proud to have a flag fly over the nation's Capitol recognizing our volunteers," Gohmert concluded. "The Earth Team is a vital part of our overall conservation effort. It is our sincere hope that the observance of National Volunteer Week will help motivate others to assist in our mission of Helping People Help the Land."



Vickie Fontenot, State Volunteer Coordinator presenting flag to Don Gohmert, State Conservationist

Bill Wilkes Wins National Award for Service

By Amy Maxwell, State Volunteer Coordinator, South Carolina

William "Bill" Wilkes, of Charleston, South Carolina, is truly an outstanding Earth Team volunteer. The USDA-NRCS recognized Wilkes as the 2006 National Earth Team Individual Volunteer of the Year.

South Carolina NRCS State Conservationist Walter W. Douglas said, "Mr. Wilkes is passionate about soil and water conservation, and is a firm believer in volunteer service. He is a great promoter of the Earth Team, and of soil and water conservation, and he definitely deserves this honor."

Heading up the local dune restoration project on Sullivan's Island in Charleston County for over fifteen years, his contagious spirit inspired hundreds of other volunteers to join the Earth Team and to help rebuild the dunes that pro-

tect this fragile barrier island. Coastal South Carolina, including Sullivan's Island, sustained major damage from Hurricane Hugo in 1989, and Wilkes has worked tirelessly to help restore the natural barrier of dunes and dune plants that once protected the coastline.

Working with local and county groups and leaders, Wilkes assists in coordinating weekend workdays for hundreds of volunteers. These volunteers plant dune plants and erect sand fencing. Without the dunes and plants to protect the island's homes and buildings from storm surge, the island would suffer major damage, including flooding. The dune plants and fencing protect vulnerable and valuable dune area, in addition to protecting habitat for sea turtles.

Wilkes was instrumental in getting almost all of the materials donated - from

work gloves, to hammers, nails, and fence posts - keeping material costs to a minimum. "We are very proud that Mr. Wilkes is a part of the Earth Team in South Carolina, and NRCS hopes other private citizens will join our effort to protect the valuable natural resources here in the Palmetto State," remarked Douglas.



Bill Wilkes, a graduate of The Citadel in 1949 was featured in Citadel Magazine for his outstanding volunteer efforts

Earth Day Celebration at Nutter Fort Primary

By Christina Yakunich, Earth Team Volunteer, West Virginia



Christina Yakunich of West Virginia University teaches Nutter Elementary students about the water cycle

On Tuesday, April 24, 2007, Nutter Fort Primary Second Grade hosted students from West Virginia University representing the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The three students, Christina Yakunich, Michael Marra, and Kelly Lang are Earth Team Volunteers for the NRCS and members of the WVU Environmental Protection Club.

The Earth Team Volunteers put together an interactive education project to teach the students about the importance of the Earth's natural resources. Nearly 150 second grade students participated in a hands-on activity dealing with soil and water conservation. WVU students displayed and explained how the water cycle works. Primary students also looked at layers of soil and learned how they are formed.

This project was in conjunction with Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, 2007. Inside the classroom, many students continued their education, learning in depth about water and it's importance in our lives.

Michael Marra shows students how to use a soil probe



The Earth Team Provides a Perfect Opportunity

By Jennifer Salak, Earth Team Volunteer, Nebraska

As a graduate student studying public affairs at the University of Maryland University College, one of my degree requirements was to complete an in-



Jennifer Salak, Earth Team Volunteer

ternship. Since I had an undergraduate degree in environmental science and work experience as a communications professional with the Cooperative Extension, I wanted to intern at an organization that was dedicated to conservation and the environment. One agency

immediately came to my mind – the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – but I wasn't sure what opportunities were available.

I wanted to find an internship/volunteer opportunity in Nebraska. When I saw the Earth Team information on the Nebraska NRCS web site, I knew it was the right place for me.

When I attended the 2006 Soil and Water Conservation Society's (SWCS) annual conference in Keystone, Colorado, I met Bonnie Allely, NRCS Volunteer Liaison. We talked at great length about my desire to work for NRCS as a public affairs intern/volunteer. She was very excited about me joining the team and told me to submit an application.

Bonnie forwarded my application to Pat McGrane, State Public Affairs Specialist for NRCS in Nebraska. I started my internship in January 2007. Over the next 14 weeks, I was involved

in numerous public affairs projects. I wrote stories for the NebNews newsletter and press releases and helped update the Nebraska NRCS web site.

I enjoyed working on these projects immensely; however, my favorite job involved going out into the field and interviewing and photographing landowners who have successfully utilized NRCS' wetland conservation programs.

After my internship was finished, I received a glowing evaluation and an 'A' for the course. More important, I gained confidence in my writing ability, learned about how public affairs works in the 'real world,' and networked with great people.

Even though my internship is officially over, I plan to continue working as an Earth Team volunteer with the public affairs staff, and hopefully in the future I can work for NRCS as a full-time public affairs specialist.

Vermilion Volunteers Repair Hurricane Affected Area

By Mitzi Dohrman, District Secretary, Louisiana

NRCS and the Vermilion Soil and Water Conservation District, along with the help of Earth Team volunteers, have planted 2,850 bare root tree seedlings along several Hurricane Rita-affected marsh areas of Vermilion Parish. Due to generous monetary donations from the South Brown Conservation District in South Dakota and Sussex, Kent and New Castle Conservation Districts in Delaware, the seedlings were purchased. Vermilion SWCD replaced some of what was lost and educated both the young and old on important issues such as conservation and community involvement.

The Vermilion SWCD will work to monitor the progress of the seedlings and will report back to the donor districts on the survival and growth of the various plantings.



Volunteers Will Husband and Kyle Soileau help plant on Pecan Island



Earth Team Volunteers from J.H. Williams Middle School: 4-H Club, Science Club, Special Resources Class and involved parents, LSU FFA Association, LSU Extension Office, LA Department of Ag & Forestry and Vermilion SWCD personnel

State Secretary Passionate For No-Till

By Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist, Iowa

Adams County District Conservationist Rick Sprague jokes that his district's state secretary, Sheila O'Riley, is so passionate about no-till that she promotes the soil saving concept around the clock. He sees O'Riley constantly talking up no-till to farmers during working hours and to gardeners in her off hours.

As a master gardener, O'Riley knows gardening. From her experience working with conservationists promoting no-till to farmers, she also knows people have trouble accepting change.

O'Riley says, "No-till is unusual. It's different. It's trashy and unattractive and to some it looks ugly." Before a speaking engagement, O'Riley will don an unattractive wide brimmed hat

and unsightly house coat. Then she will introduce herself to audiences as the "Ugly Gardener." O'Riley explains that her friends gave her the ugly hat after she planted her first no-till garden. Instead of being tilled a 'pretty' black, O'Riley's garden looked trashy to some with its soil-saving residue. Liking the harvest results and the soil savings, O'Riley took the hat and de-



Sheila O'Riley demonstrates her no-till gardening technique

cidied to become the Ugly Gardener. As an Earth Team volunteer, O'Riley spends many off-work hours encouraging others to try no-till gardening. She is frequently interviewed by reporters about her "ugly gardens." O'Riley says, "Garden tilling opens up the soil to erosion and weed growth. Instead of tilling the ground, no-till gardeners plant garden seeds into layers of mulch. No-till gardens grow nearly weed free and require little maintenance and very little watering."

"And," O'Riley adds, "the results are delicious!"

For a soil saving no-till garden recipe you can use, see Page 12 or go to www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov and click on "backyard"

Volunteering is Two-Way Help

By Mike Patterson, District Conservationist, Ohio

Some volunteers, like Angi Lesch and Sarah Lengyl at the Huron County Agricultural Service Center, just want to help with the workload. Mike Patterson, District Conservationist for Huron and Erie counties, says the 1985 Farm Bill resulted in an NRCS staff decrease while the workload increased.

Volunteers, therefore, play a key role.

Patterson says Lesch and Lengyl are two of his top volunteers. "The hardest part is keeping them busy because they get things done so quickly."

Both women are clients with Christie Lane Industries, which provides volunteer opportunities for people with developmental disorders. While helping the NRCS office through their more than 200 accumulated hours of service, Lesch and Lengyl are also helping themselves. Linda Smith, a community support employee at Christi Lane Industries says volunteering prepares clients for the world of work. Patterson commends Christie Lane Industries for being a "tremendous resource" for the community.

Patterson has been honored with a National Earth Team NRCS Employee Award for the quantity and quality of volunteers he's recruited. In his 20 years with NRCS, he's supervised more than 45 volunteers and 2,500 volunteer hours.

"It's probably one of the more meaningful recognitions that I've received," Patterson said, but he wouldn't take all the credit. "It's the volunteers who really deserve the accolades."

Earth Team Volunteers Donate over 1,700 Hours in 13 Years!

By Julie MacSwain, Public Affairs Specialist, Minnesota and Dave Copeland, District Conservationist, Minnesota

The Rochester Senior Center in Minnesota received an award in recognition of its 13 years and over 1,700 hours of volunteer service as an Earth Team Volunteer Group. Dave Copeland, District Conservationist, presented the award to Hazle Robinson, whose volunteer service includes assuring the Omsted County USDA-NRCS has enough volunteers to mail the quarterly newsletter. The volunteer time from the local Senior citizens has saved USDA approximately \$34,000.



On behalf of the Rochester Senior Center, Hazle Robinson accepts an award from Dave Copeland for the center's tireless hours of volunteer service

Let's Remember ...

Patrick J. O'Donnell wasn't just an Army Veteran, accountant, Toastmaster, Lion, Knight, or Cubs fan, he was a conservation farmer who installed many practices on his farm. He left the farming to his sons and was very interested in maintaining the land for future generations.



After retiring from his job in town, he became the very first Earth Team Volunteer in the award-winning Cass County, Indiana office. His volunteer duties included administrative and technical field assistance. Patrick died on April 28, 2007.

Volunteering - what a legacy to leave to your family and community.

Fun at the Nebraska Science Bowl

By Joanna Pope, State Volunteer Coordinator, Nebraska

Nebraska NRCS sponsored the Nebraska Regional Science Bowl Competitions for 40 middle school and 32 high school teams. The science bowl competitions were held on the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (UNL) campus and staffed entirely by 103 volunteers.

Arlis Plummer, NRCS Hydraulic Engineer at the Nebraska state office in Lincoln, served as volunteer coordinator for both science bowl competitions. She made sure that all volunteers were signed up as Earth Team members and properly thanked for their time.

According to Plummer, many volunteers come back year after year because they enjoy the experience. Most of the volunteers were NRCS employees or UNL employees and students. Volunteers were also recruited from U.S. Geological Survey, Kiwanis Club, and Toastmasters.

To help promote the science bowl to fellow students, volunteers were also selected from the Upward Bound Program. This program is comprised of high-potential high school students who have life factors that might reduce their potential to attend college. According to Plummer, the sci-

ence bowl competition helps these students network with professionals and other successful students.

The students shared the volunteers' positive experience.

Floyd Doughty, a coach from one of the competing high schools, said, "Our students had a great time, and we really appreciated everyone's extra efforts to make it a good day. Everyone went above and beyond. Our kids send their thanks, and they are already making plans for next year!"



Bob Ahrnes, Stacy Modelski, and Jennifer Nelson score the competition

She Just Keeps On Giving, and Giving and...

By Mary Hess, State Volunteer Coordinator, Illinois

Sandra Szadai retired this year with 22 years of outstanding service to the Federal Government. Sandy has been a Conveyance Examiner for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service the past 11 years.

Sandy signed up as an Earth Team volunteer as soon as she could and has logged in over 35 volunteer hours assisting the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) staff at the Illinois NRCS State Office. Sandy checks WRP contract documents and files for accuracy and completeness.

Sandy is also enjoying her grandkids, planning a trip to Europe, and enjoyed the hummingbirds' return to central Illinois in May.



Sandra Szadai

Start a Recruitment Epidemic

By Patty Shumway, State Volunteer Coordinator, Oregon

An article in The Strategist's Winter 2007 issue has some helpful tips on how to fuel a recruitment epidemic. Tom Hagley, author of "Writing Winning Proposals," focuses on volunteer retention through the phenomenon "recruitment epidemic."

A recruitment epidemic occurs when an individual is so moved by a volunteer experience, he or she is compelled to share. This "contagious enthusiasm" motivates the individual to repeat volunteer experiences and inspire others. The cycle is neces-

sary, because according to Hagley's University of Oregon studies, "lack of time" is a main deterrent to volunteering. To compete with the time crunch, organizations must focus on creating the right environment for volunteers.

"Volunteers want to see direct results from their personal efforts," says Hagley. Respect a volunteer's time with well-defined, interesting and relevant assignments. A job title for resume use is important, but so is providing meaningful recognition beyond a mere thank-you.

A volunteer's tangible needs include a work area and tools, descriptive list

of co-workers, and important publications and documents to read. Supplement these with periodic critiques, encouragement and specific praise, and conversations about how assignments contribute to the volunteer's professional goals.

The most successful recruitment epidemic happens by word-of-mouth. If a volunteer has an exceptional experience through social connections, documented accomplishments, and new capabilities, those volunteer hours will feel worthwhile and the individual's enthusiasm will infect another potential volunteer.

Hard Work Pays off in Pennsylvania

By Rose Marie Updegraff, State Volunteer Coordinator, Pennsylvania

Crystal Smith and Elizabeth Rainier were honored for supporting the NRCS office in Fayette County, Pennsylvania.

They assisted with the conservation planning process, organized and updated files, helped with contour strip lay-out, went along on EQIP rankings, attended meetings, and learned about NRCS.

Their eagerness to help out and try new things was refreshing. Crystal and Beth graduated from California University of Pennsylvania in May. During Volunteer Week, a pizza party was held in their honor, and they received certificates and some tokens of appreciation. Thank you, Crystal and Beth!

Front row: Elizabeth Rainer and Crystal Smith, Earth Team Volunteers. Back Row: Laura Smith, Suzy Funka-Petery, Ashley Lenig, NRCS Staff



Idaho Students Determine Water Content

By Jeff Anderson, Hydrologist-Snow Survey and Bonnie A. Long, State Volunteer Coordinator, Idaho

On February 15, 2007, seven 12th grade Advanced Placement Environmental Science students from Capital High School in Boise, Idaho, joined NRCS Hydrologist Jeff Anderson to measure snow.



Students weigh snow tubes to determine water content

The group used snowshoes to walk a few hundred yards to the Mores Creek Summit SNOTEL site that is located at 6,100 feet in Idaho's west central mountains about 35 miles northeast of Boise. Once at the SNOTEL site, students were taught how to use snowtubes to measure snow water content and how to record the information on a note form.

Standing on over five feet of snow that would be knee-deep if liquefied helped students appreciate the importance of snow to Westerners who depend on snow-melt for upwards of 70% of their annual water supply.

Students also learned how the automated SNOTEL weather station measures snow water content, precipitation, air temperature and snow depth. They were surprised by the fact the data is transmitted by bouncing radio signals off meteor trails.

This type of opportunity is available to other schools through the "Adopt-a-SNOTEL" program.

For more information about Adopt-a-SNOTEL visit the following NRCS Web site: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

Keyword Search : Snotel

Local Earth Team Hosts Backyard Conference

By Dick Tremain, Public Affairs Specialist, Iowa

Adams County Earth Team Volunteers hosted a hundred people at their 6th Annual Backyard Conservation Conference in Corning, Iowa. Attendees were able to choose from three of seventeen breakout sessions and explore topics such as successfully raising tomatoes, installing rain gardens, container gardening, no-till gardening and taking a conservation farm tour.

Keynote speaker was The Butterfly Lady Kathleen Ziemer. Ziemer showed participants how to attract, feed and care for butterflies.

The Backyard Conference is one of a number of activities the local Adams County Earth Team puts on for its community each year.

Local residents are learning about backyard conservation and joining the bandwagon.

A tour of local neighborhoods shows many are installing backyard conservation practices. That makes State Secretary Sheila O'Riley very happy.

O'Riley says, "Our goal is to make Adams County the Earth Team Capital of the US."



Earth Team Volunteers Sheila O'Riley, Cynthia Dobrovolny, Sindra Jensen, Rick Sprague and John Klein at the Adams County Backyard Conservation Conference

Earth Team Volunteer Receives Prudential Spirit of Community Award

By Perry Stevens, State Public Affairs Specialist, Tennessee

Tennessee NRCS Earth Team Volunteer Hannah Daugherty, 7th grader at Dayton City School, was recognized in the 2007 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program at the Dayton City Council meeting.

Sponsored by Prudential Financial and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the awards recognize outstanding community service by young Americans.

“Young people who contribute their time and talents to their communities are role models for all of us,” said Arthur F. Ryan, Chairman and CEO of Prudential Financial. “We salute their dedication, their achievements and their spirit of community.”

On behalf of the President’s Council

on Service and Civic Participation, Hannah received the President’s Volunteer Service Award Certificate and a letter from President George W. Bush. Hannah also received a letter from Congressman Zach Wamp commending her for her long hours of dedication and commitment.

Hannah serves as an Earth Team volunteer with the USDA-NRCS by helping at the Hamilton County Fair where she assists with the Sammy Soil/Ruby Raindrop Coloring Contest and the petting zoo. She has helped with the annual Tree Day held at the local mall educating folks on the importance of trees and handing out samples.

“These Honorees practice a lesson we hope all young people, as well as adults, will emulate: that volunteering within the community is an essential part of one’s life,” said NASSP Executive Director Gerald Tirozzi.

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards are supported by Girl Scouts of the USA, National 4-H Council, American Red Cross, YMCA of the USA, the Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network and many other national youth, service and education organizations.



Hannah is the daughter of Kathy Daugherty, NRCS District Conservationist for Cleveland and Chattanooga Field Offices in Tennessee

Picture Perfect in Montana

By Tasha Gibby, State Volunteer Coordinator, Montana

Slides taken by Montana NRCS employees over the last 30 years usually need more than simple scanning before they can be used in today’s electronic documents and presentations. Thanks to Earth Team Volunteer Karla Mertens-Morse, photos found in the Montana NRCS digital photo library will be sharp, clean, color corrected, and ready to use.

The photo library, housed on a dedicated hard drive, is available to NRCS employees throughout Montana. Users can search and download Montana NRCS photos ready for insertion in PowerPoint presentations, reports, and other professional documents.

Karla has been contributing her skills to this project since September 2006. She does contract work as a designer and has a job with a commercial printing company but still manages to give at least an hour or two of her time to NRCS almost every week. We appreciate her volunteer work every time we use a photo that was quick to find and ready to place into a Microsoft Word or PowerPoint document.



Karla Mertens-Morse

Students Design Salt Marsh Restoration

By Carol Rickless, State Volunteer Coordinator, Massachusetts

A multi-cultural group of Smith College engineering students volunteered 1,658 hours for the Massachusetts Earth Team from September 2006 to May 2007. The volunteers worked with NRCS staff and partners to design a culvert for the restoration of the Weir Creek Salt Marsh in Dennis, Massachusetts.

Ida Ngambeki of Uganda and her fellow students, Leonora Baddoo of Ghana, June Yeung, originally of Hong Kong, and Meghan Irving of New Hampshire, worked in collaboration with NRCS and the town of Dennis to prepare a final design for the salt marsh restoration culvert improvement. The final design and specifications will be used by NRCS and the town for obtaining funding and permits, and as a construction package for implementation.

The volunteers researched salt marshes, modeled tidal flow into the marsh, planned and developed alternatives for the site, then prepared a design, construction specifications, and a cost estimate for the project.

NRCS engineering and resources staffs and the partner agencies provided reference material and technical guidance. They also assisted students in the project site survey, provided guidance on modeling and evaluating alternatives, collaborated weekly through meetings, e-mail, and teleconferences, and answered questions regarding planning and design.

“The students were professional and represented the Smith College Picker Engineering Program well,” said Dennis Verdi, NRCS Planning Engineer. “They worked diligently on the project throughout the year and did an excellent job on the final presentation at the May engineering design clinic.”

Earth Team Volunteers Help Donate Trees

By Terri Christensen, Humboldt SWCD Secretary, Iowa

As part of a nearly decade-old Earth Day tradition, Terri Christensen hands out tree seedlings and explains the environmental benefits they provide. Representing NRCS, the Humboldt Soil and Water Conservation District and Humboldt County, Terri, with help from NRCS Earth Team volunteers Mitch Williams, Cory Shillington and Jon Pedersen provided a tree to every fourth-grader in Humboldt County this year.

These Humboldt Senior High School students have been working as Earth Team volunteers as part of an environmental studies class. They helped Terri explain the best place to plant and maintain the red maples before handing out the 135 trees to students across Humboldt County. “I think the fourth-graders appreciated having a younger face in the room, instead of an adult NRCS figure,” said Christensen.

Pedersen received a tree from Christensen when he was in fourth grade. “I remember receiving a maple tree from Terri seven years ago,” said Pedersen. “My family and I planted it at my grandma’s house. It’s neat that I’m now the one presenting a tree.”

Christensen plans to keep the Earth Day tradition going. “I think trees provide so many wonderful benefits,” she said. “I really enjoy the trees in my yard. They attract a lot of different types of birds. I think planting a tree is a really good thing.”



Smith College Picker Program Design Clinic Students and NRCS Staff stand in front of project information poster. Left to Right: Nancy Sheard, NRCS Civil Engineering Technician; Leonora Baddoo, Meghan Irving, Ida Ngambeki, June Yeung, Earth Team Volunteers and Dennis Verdi, NRCS Planning Engineer

NRCS Cleans Pascagoula River After Katrina

By Jeannine May, State Public Affairs Specialist, Mississippi

On May 4, 2007, two boats launched from the Pascagoula Audubon Society to carry workers from conservation agencies in a cleanup of the lower Pascagoula River, the last free flowing river in the U.S. that drains into the Gulf of Mexico.

Wallace Cade, NRCS Soil Conservationist and Rick Hagar, RC&D Coordinator, along with RC&D Earth Team volunteers, traveled seven miles up the river to clean up debris from Hurricane Katrina. The volunteer group collected over a ton of debris including a refrigerator, ice chests, tires, shoes, boat parts and lots of styrofoam.



NRCS Team helps clean up Hurricane Katrina debris from the Pascagoula River

The clean-up force of 24 volunteers spent two days collecting the debris along the waterways of the three coastal counties.

“It takes forever for this garbage to break down and it doesn’t belong in the waterways,” stated Greg Crochet, SWCD Commissioner. “A lot of this land along the Pascagoula River is recaptured land and valuable.”

At the end of the day, the volunteers saw one of the reasons for their hard work. Returning from a long day of pulling trash from the river and marshes, a bald eagle sitting next to a nest with an eaglet as if to say, “Thanks, NRCS Earth Team.”

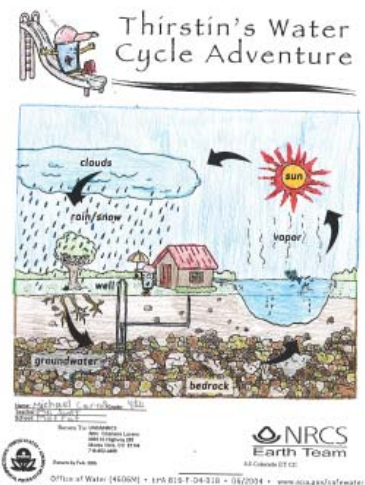
Earth Team Annual Coloring Contest Winners

By Katherine Burse-Johnson, State Public Affairs Specialist, Colorado

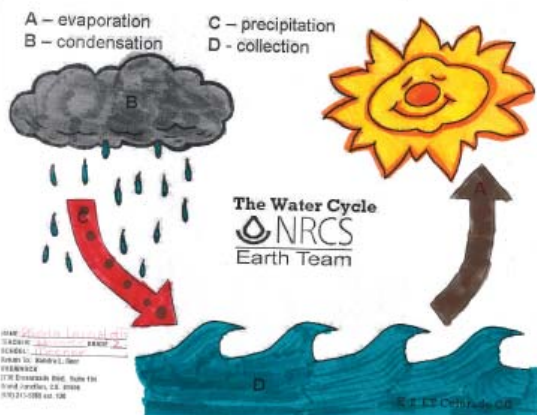
The Colorado NRCS Earth Team hosted its third annual coloring contest in recognition of Earth Day.

The contest is for students grades K-2 and 3-5. A second grader from Meeker Elementary was the statewide winner for grades K-2 and a fourth grader from Moffat Elementary, won for grades 3-5. Congratulations, everyone! Remember, Earth Day is Everyday!

Moffat Elementary winning artwork



Meeker Elementary winning artwork



“What’s In It For Me?”

From the Volunteer Viewpoint

By Gayle Rouselle, District Earth Team Coordinator, Louisiana

Whenever someone is asked if they would like to volunteer or become involved with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation programs, the response is usually positive and enthusiastic. But, occasionally someone will ask, “What’s in it for me?”

I think of an Earth Team volunteer, working with NRCS, as an unselfish and helpful, caring person. However, Ralph Waldo Emerson said that one of the most beautiful compensations in life is that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself. I agree and with this in mind, I wrote a list to summarize how volunteerism helps the volunteer mentally, spiritually, and how it can benefit their career; in other words, “what’s in it for me.”

Volunteering makes you feel needed and when we become a part of something, it becomes a part of us. Feeling needed makes you feel important and special.

Volunteering is an opportunity to learn new skills.

Volunteering is a growing experience. Serving a cause, working with people, and seeing the benefits, knowing that you were a part of it is gratifying.

Volunteering helps you meet new people and breaks down barriers of misunderstanding, mistrust and fear.

Volunteering is an opportunity to create new contacts which might help your business or career.

Volunteering makes a good impression on others (looks good on a resume or job application).

Volunteering is exciting because life is more exciting when it’s lived for others. Life is what you make of it; exciting for some and for others it can be boring and lonely. As long as you’re a volunteer, you won’t be lonely!

Most of our Earth Team volunteers are teachers that provide assistance at the Fast Food Farm and with other special events. I asked one of them, Terri Meany, who has given her time to a variety of conservation projects, her thoughts and she graciously wrote the following:

“Working on my praxis paper for my Master’s degree at Loyola, brought me in contact with Mrs. Gayle Roussel. My paper was on water quality, and Gayle was the Soil & Water Conservation representative for my home district. She was most helpful in expanding my understanding of watersheds and the factors affecting them.

A praxis paper differs from a thesis in that it calls for the author to put one’s concerns into a practical service addressing the cited need. Here, too, Gayle was helpful as she introduced me to the Earth Team Volunteer program. Through that program I was privileged to participate in field trips, presentations, and hands-on educational activities, at LUMCON, Ocean Commotion, the Fast Food Farm, the Wonders of Wetlands swamp tour, a locally-hosted Project W.E.T. teacher workshop, a workshop on soils, and the tree sale. It was both a delight and personally fulfilling to share these times and adventures with children, with fellow teachers, and with others interested in preserving and restoring our environment. While my current work schedule prohibits me from being as active with the Earth Team Volunteer program, I still look forward to receiving the newsletters and doing what I can to support the program’s valuable efforts.”

It’s Terri’s nature to be a giving person and she would never ask what’s in it for her but just to let you know: Terri made an “A” on her praxis!

Basic No-till Garden Recipe (From Page 4)

Just like a basic cake recipe, the ingredients listed can be varied and embellished. This will make an approximately 4 foot x 4 foot garden. This method will be especially enjoyed by gardeners who are busy, don't like to pull weeds, and don't have time to water.

40 Sheets of Newspaper

5-gallon bucket 2/3 full of water

40 lb. bag of composted manure

1 leaf cart or garbage bag full of chipped wood

1 leaf cart or garbage bag full of dried leaves (preferably chopped)

1 leaf cart or garbage bag full of grass clippings (fresh is best)

1-2 gallons good garden soil or potting soil

Water

Put newspapers in bucket of water to completely wet. Open paper and lay on ground (over grass, weeds, old driveway, etc.) 4-6 sheets thick. Overlap edges. This becomes the weed barrier and will eventually compost. Spread composted manure over paper to attract worms and other helpful soil organisms. The following layers should each be 2-4 inches deep. Spread wood chips next (this first layer should be coarse enough to allow air circulation). Use a rake to level - if needed. Add water. Next, layer the dried leaves followed by grass clippings; level with a rake if necessary and water after each layer. You may plant into this garden right away or allow to cook (or compost) over a period of time. To plant seeds in a row, open up a furrow in the layers with a hoe or rake (or use your hands), spread in a one inch deep strip of soil, lay the seeds on the soil and cover with the recommended amount of additional soil. To transplant from a pot, simply open up a hole in the layers, set the plant in, (if desired, add a handful of soil around the soil ball of the plant) and pull the mulch back up around it. To broadcast seed, mix the seed in some soil and toss the soil around on the top of the garden.

If you find you need more garden space, simply add on. You can substitute or add any other organic material suitable for composting such as compost, chopped corn cobs, hay, cardboard boxes (for the weed barrier), shredded office paper, peat moss, sawdust, chopped stalks, straw, wood ashes, organic kitchen scraps, etc.

Submissions to VolunteerVoice

Articles and photos for publication should be e-mailed, via your State Volunteer Coordinator, to michele.eginore@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:

- 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.gov or call 1-888-LANDCARE.

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