

Potential Earth Team Volunteers Are Everywhere

Submitted by Deborah Lynn, Greene County SWCD, Indiana

John is one of the most faithful volunteers at the Greene County Field Office. He has shown up every quarter for almost a year to help with newsletter mailings. He laughs, he folds, he jokes, he folds, he takes a break, and he folds some more. Why is John so significant? All of our volunteers are important, but John is homeless and currently lives in a shelter. He and some of his fellow roommates enjoy coming to the office to assist with environmental concerns. They have donated 46 hours of work since September 2007.

Our volunteer workforce has allowed us to work and laugh with a diverse group of individuals. Two sisters from Kuwait, who were visiting their grandmother for a month in the summer of 2007, chose to volunteer for the Earth Team. They laughed, chatted, labeled, and zip coded over 1200 newsletters.

"Sometimes we get the idea that only specific types of people will make good volunteers."

We have had volunteers from the Department of Corrections who were given an opportunity to impact the environment through community service hours. And let's not forget that Earth Team volunteers come from the local high school's chapter of the National FFA Organization.

We are looking forward to the summer of 2008, when a current Ag Business major will assist the staff with both clerical and field work as an Earth Team volunteer. Our future volunteer is looking forward to learning a variety of tasks, including working in the office, walking the fields, and working with our customers by assisting with applications for a buffer program. Her work with the Greene County Field Office will look good on her resume!

"Sometimes we get the idea that only specific types of people will make good volunteers. Our experience has shown that volunteers come in all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, and cultures and the diversity they have brought to the office has made it a win-win situation" said Dan Luczynski, NRCS District Conservationist for Greene County.



FFA Members

Earth Team Volunteer Plans FFA Land Judging Contest

Submitted by Lori Valadez, State Volunteer Coordinator, Texas

Earth Team Volunteer Dennis Ressel is a retired Soil Scientist of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) who continues to give his time and talent to the Vernon Field Office. Dennis sets up the Land Judging Contest for the local chapter's National FFA Organization every year. The contest is sponsored by the Wilbarger, Foard, and Hardeman Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

"Dennis always does an excellent job preparing for the contest and instructors, as well as the youth participants appreciate his work," said Reggie Quiett, NRCS Resource Team Leader. "He does this without expecting anything in return and, in fact, prefers to not be recognized for his efforts."

Quiett said Ressel enjoyed a 35+ year career with the NRCS and was always willing to help out in many district sponsored contests and has continued this commitment into his retirement years.



Dennis Ressel

Sharing, Caring, and Volunteering for 10+ Years

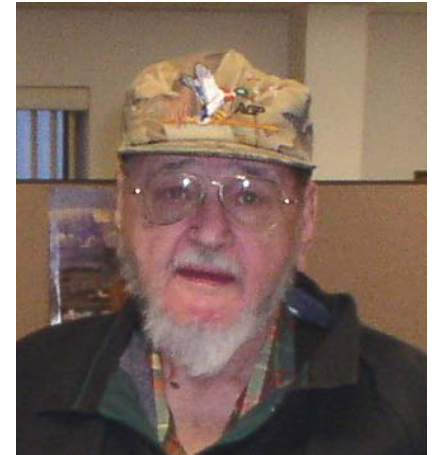
Submitted by Nancy Atkinson, State Volunteer Coordinator, Wyoming

November 14, 1997, was a great day for Wyoming's Earth Team because that was the day that Ken Andrews signed a volunteer application form for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Cheyenne Field Office. Over 10 years later, he still provides his multi-faceted talents, experience, and knowledge.

Ken is a former vocational agriculture instructor and recipient of many awards. His Earth Team job title is Professional Events Coordinator and reflects his outstanding facilitator and coordinator skills. However, Ken's assistance goes above and beyond this title. He organizes outreach and educational events, helps with field office spot checks, serves on a variety of committees related to NRCS conservation activities, plans and facilitates meetings, and provides office support. Ken is an asset to the field office staff.

His accomplishments include development of a Conservation Tillage Guide Book in concert with seminars, meetings, and other guidance to land users interested in using this conservation practice in Laramie County. The Southeast Wyoming Farm and Crop Expo in Albin received a boost from Ken's professional planning skills. For the past two years Ken has coordinated the event; attendance and sponsors have increased each year.

When not volunteering for the Earth Team, Ken spends time writing and working with wood. If it sounds like Ken Andrews has many talents, he does! The Cheyenne Field Office staff are glad that he is on the team and realize that his contributions have assisted them in completing the agency's mission. Ken's efforts over the past 10 years have saved the technical staff countless hours and have allowed them to address other important conservation issues as they help Wyoming people help the land.



Ken Andrews

Earth Team Provides Work Experience for Wisconsin College Graduate

Submitted by Janet Kelley, Soil Conservationist, Wisconsin

Richard "Kyle" Heimerl graduated from the University of Stevens Point in May 2007, with a degree in Soil Science. He stopped by the Columbia County NRCS office looking for a job and ended up becoming an Earth Team volunteer.

Kyle has attended various sessions such as Level 1 Prescribed Burning, Toolkit, and RUSLE2 and was eager to put the knowledge to work. Kyle has assisted with conservation plans, created maps in Toolkit, worked with RUSLE2, and helped with HEL & wetland determinations. He's enthusiastic about field work and has assisted with surveys and construction layout.

Kyle believes that his experience as an Earth Team volunteer is invaluable. He's had the ability to work with customers and conservation partners and learned about several conservation programs that are available to help land owners conserve and protect our natural resources. Kyle is excited about the future of conservation and is hoping to make a difference and contribute to the cause.



Kyle Heimerl

Retired Hydrologist Is Still Hooked on NRCS

Submitted by Vera Thomas, Centers Volunteer Coordinator, North Carolina

Don Huffman said that he knew he would be back when he retired as a hydrologist from the NRCS National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) in January of 2004. "I really enjoyed my job, the program, and the people that I worked with," he said. Thirty-three years and more than 4,200 volunteer hours later, he's still hooked.

Don says that since retirement, being part of the Earth Team has allowed him a rare opportunity to continue to travel, maintain his troubleshooting and repair proficiency, and most importantly, he can work with the newer NRCS employees now installing and maintaining SCAN and SNOTEL soil and climatic monitoring gear.

Since becoming a volunteer, Huffman has been an integral part of the NWCC teams. Looking back over the last four years, he thinks his efforts have helped make a difference. The SNOTEL and SCAN systems

provide extremely important snow, water and climatic data for a multitude of users who make critical decisions based on this information.

"Providing quality data means installing the sensors in the field, calibrating and operating [them] properly, and insuring that the collected data is transmitted in a timely and consistent manner," Huffman

stated. "Trained volunteers available to help accomplish these tasks during our current times of shrinking budgets and reduced staffs is huge. Besides that, it's still a whole lot of fun," said Don.



Don Huffman

Colorado Earth Team Recognizes Earth Day Coloring Contest Winners

Submitted by Colleen McCleary, State Volunteer Coordinator, Colorado

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) takes pride in saying "Every Day is Earth Day for NRCS" here in Colorado! In celebration of National Earth Day on April 22, 2008, the Colorado Earth Team sponsored a state-wide coloring contest for elementary students. The goal of the contest was to promote the importance of preserving Colorado's natural resources. Five schools in the Arkansas Valley took part in the coloring contest. Coloring Contest pictures were distributed to students at two levels - Kindergarten through 2nd and 3rd through 5th. The Colorado Earth Team committee judged entries on originality and neatness. Prizes were awarded to first place winners in each grade and to the two grand champion state winners in each category. The Colorado Earth Team has made the National Earth Day coloring contest an annual event for students throughout Colorado since 2005.

The 2008 winners from the Arkansas Valley in Colorado were:



Jakob Juul, Grand Champion State Winner in the Kindergarten through 2nd Grade Category



Lane Walter, Arkansas Valley First Place Winner in the Kindergarten through 2nd Grade Category

Earth Team Volunteers Assist South Missouri Water Quality Project

Submitted by Mary Giles, Volunteer Coordinator, Missouri

Three Senior students at Greenwood Laboratory School, located on the Missouri State University campus in Springfield, and one former student from Ozarks Technical Community College became Earth Team volunteers at the USDA-NRCS South Missouri Water Quality Project (SMWQ) and completed projects which supported the mission of the office.



Landon Tagge

Madison Pulley volunteered under the supervision of Steve Hefner, Project Team Leader, and created a public service announcement illustrating the positive impacts recycling paper has on local forests, soils, and water resources. Upon approval, Madison's public service announcement will be posted on the USDA-NRCS state web site.



Madison Pulley

Landon Tagge assisted Robert DeMoss, Forester, and Mark Green, District Conservationist, with a tree planting project in Greene County. Landon also developed a forestry brochure covering the benefits of windbreaks. The brochure will be used to promote forestry conservation practices at local outreach meetings.



Jenny Barkdoll

Kate Mattax participated in a pilot adaptation of the Early Childhood Education Program under the supervision of Mary Giles, Education/Outreach Coordinator. Kate developed a lesson plan about water conservation which included a story book and supporting materials. She student-taught her lesson in a kindergarten classroom and created an Early Childhood Education public service announcement. This supports the outreach strategy of the SMWQ to offer the Early Childhood Program to rural high school students within the watershed.



Kate Mattax

"Hi Jenny! Remember me?" That's how the conversation began when Mary Giles, SMWQ Education/Outreach Coordinator, called Jenny Barkdoll, a former Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) student and Earth Team volunteer, and asked if she would be interested in illustrating a 24 page children's book about the forms of water. When Jenny seemed interested, Mary dropped the challenge, "And did I mention that I need it by tomorrow?"

Not too many people who are working full time would have accepted such a challenge, but Jenny did and delivered the book the next day. It was immediately used by staff to teach an original water lesson at an early childhood facility. In 2007, Jenny wrote and illustrated a children's water book as part of the USDA-NRCS partnership with children's literature staff at OTC. As Mary expected, the second book was a big hit with the children!



Venessa is looking for articles for the next issue of the VolunteerVoice. Deadline for article submission is August 15th. Remember to submit photos with captions and keep your articles to a maximum of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page. Questions? Contact her at:

venessa.homewood@ia.usda.gov

Illinois Traveling Earth Team Award Is Presented

Submitted by Kathy Bartley-McFall, Administrative Support Coordinator, Illinois

Illinois developed a unique way to recognize employees with the largest number of Earth Team volunteers. The Traveling Earth Team Award was recently presented to Gene Davis, Shelbyville District Conservationist. It's no wonder that Gene utilizes the skills of Earth Team volunteers since he also serves as the Acting RC&D Coordinator for Heartland and serves as one of the 25 committee members for the Spores and More (Mushroom) Festival.

The committee is in charge of planning the Annual Mushroom Festival that occurs in April. The festival encompasses several towns and draws those individuals who love to hunt mushrooms in the woods.

Gene's ability to get Earth Team volunteers to serve on various committees and provide assistance in both the field and the RC&D offices earned him the Illinois Traveling Earth Team Award.



(Left) Gene Davis and Bill Lewis, Assistant State Conservationist

Earth Team Group Receives Top Honors from the Western RC&D Association

Submitted by Joanna Pope, State Volunteer Coordinator, Nebraska

The Nebraska State RC&D and Western Region RC&D Associations honored the Ord Chapter of the National FFA Organization on April 12, 2008. The group received the first place award for "Outstanding Youth." The chapter has been serving as Earth Team volunteers for the NRCS field office and the Loup Basin RC&D for several years, according to RC&D Coordinator Leroy Jons.

"They have been signed up as an Earth Team group for a good while. In just the past six months they volunteered 150 hours. Last year they donated approximately 240 hours," Jons said.

The group has continued to demonstrate a high level of commitment to the Earth Team for several years. For this reason, they were nominated for the "Outstanding Youth Award" by the Loup Basin RC&D and Keep Loup Basin Beautiful. According to Jons, the Earth Team group has been very instrumental in the success for several RC&D projects.

"These vocational-agriculture (vo-ag) students have helped with used tire pickups, the Kids Environmental Fair, farmstead cleanups and other projects. It is not unusual for 10 to 20 students to show up, and they work when they are assisting us. It should be noted that most, if not all, of these projects are on Saturdays when they could probably be doing other things," Jons said.

The State Outstanding Youth award was chosen from all of the nominations submitted by the 12 RC&D Councils across Nebraska. That nomination then won the top award for the Western Region RC&D Association where they beat out nominations from 10 states in the central and southern United States.



(Left to Right) Nicole Setlik and Aaron Kokes, Ord FFA officers; Dan Hruza, Nebraska State RC&D President; and Dave Ference, Ord FFA Advisor.

Offices in Colorado and Kansas Celebrate National Volunteer Week

Submitted by Colleen McCleary, State Volunteer Coordinator, Colorado & Gina Thompson, District Manager, Kansas

Colorado: The La Junta, Colorado, Area Office celebrated National Volunteer Week by holding an Open House to recognize the loyal Earth Team Volunteers of 2008. The volunteers and their families were invited to attend and received much deserved recognition and awards. Volunteer Office Assistants Leanna Chavez and Ruben Salazar and Field Volunteer Lane Simmons were recognized for the hundreds of hours they have donated to the office.



(Clockwise) Charlie Pannebaker, Lane Simmons (Volunteer), Julia Ramirez, John Knapp, and Nick Koch, Colorado



(Left) Lane Simmons, volunteer and John Knapp, Area Conservationist, Colorado



(Clockwise) Leanna Chavez and sons Aaron, Kevin and Eric at the La Junta Area Office Open House

Kansas: On April 29th, the Wilson County Conservation District and NRCS Office in Fredonia, Kansas hosted a volunteer reception and recognized their volunteers with appreciation certificates and coin purses. The office has approximately 30 volunteers who regularly provide their time and expertise to assist with conservation education activities.



(Left to Right) Jeff Schmidt, District Conservationist, Gina Thompson, District Manager and Earth Team volunteer Barbara Dodson, Kansas



(Right) Jim Carter, presents an appreciation certificate and coin purse to volunteer, Art Miller, Kansas

It's All In The Family

Submitted by Michelle Philipps, Volunteer Coordinator, Indiana

Like mother, like daughter, like daughter, like son. Members of the Grivas family have made an array of contributions to Indiana NRCS. Mom Susan is a Soil Conservationist on the Conservation Implementation Team in Greencastle. She began her career as an Earth Team volunteer in 2004, at the Greencastle Field Office and became an NRCS employee shortly thereafter.

Susan realized the benefit of the Earth Team and saw an opportunity for her daughter, Jamie, to add some volunteer work to her high school resume for college applications. Jamie joined the team and assisted NRCS and Sycamore Trails RC&D Council with office tasks. Her volunteer experience gave her some exposure to information related to her environmental studies curriculum at the university and led to a part-time job with Sycamore Trails RC&D.



*(Front L-R) Becky, Jamie and Susan
(Standing) Jonathon*

In the summer of 2007, Susan was working on the Pathway to Water Quality exhibit at the Indiana State Fair and decided it was time to introduce 15-year-old son Jonathon to the program. Jon says of his experience, "I enjoyed being an Earth Team volunteer because I felt like I was doing something to help the environment, it's a great thing to put on college applications, and it gave me something to do over the summer."

Early in 2008, daughter Becky carried on the Earth Team tradition and began volunteering a few afternoons after school with Sycamore Trails RC&D. She hopes to get some time in this summer as well.

Have you considered bringing your family into the NRCS family? What a great way to expose kids to the value of volunteering and "Helping People Help The Land!"

Ten Volunteer Management Tips

*Submitted by Pat Hoeffken, FY07 National Earth Team
Volunteer Coordinator Award Winner*

1. **Get management and staff support.**
2. **Be organized so you don't waste a volunteer's time.**
3. **Plan time for orientation and training.**
4. **Ask the volunteer about their interests and skills.**
5. **Match the interests and skills to the job. If there is no match, tell the volunteer what job(s) you do have because they may be able to meet your needs.**
6. **Have a job ready with instructions.**
7. **Assign the volunteer a "go to" person for questions.**
8. **Ask why the person is volunteering and make sure you meet their needs.**
9. **Balance the training time with volunteer's production time.**
10. **Reward the volunteer with a "thank you," a certificate, or other recognition items.**



Pat Hoeffken