



Sauk County

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UWEX AmeriCorps*VISTA Success Story

By Haley Weisert, VISTA Member

Youth Environmental Projects of Sauk County (YEPS) is a program offered for all youth, families and youth organizations within Sauk County. The goal of YEPS is to provide families and youth to participate in environmental stewardship service-learning projects. It also works to promote environmental awareness and responsibility in local youth. YEPS is forming partnerships with local organizations and youth groups to provide an opportunity for all community members to be involved in the program. The local school district has two early release dates each month which leaves afterschool organizations like Boys & Girls Club with an extra hour of service to provide. Haley Weisert is partnering with Baraboo Boys & Girls Club (BBGC) offering a variety of environmental projects and activities on early release days. This partnership allows youth an opportunity to expose themselves to YEPS and take pride in helping to better their environment and their community. Educational projects, games and activities are completed at each one-hour session. The objective is to educate local youth about the importance of our natural environment and how they impact it. Themes such as diversity, interrelationships, patterns of change, sustainability, service learning and stewardship will be cover over the school year. The partnership is in its third month and attendance has been consistent with fifteen of the same BBGC members returning for projects. The projects and activities not only teach the kids about the importance of our environment and how they affect it but it teaches them life skills as well. The first project was to create a nature journal for the youth to use when at club. They were given the template so they could also make one for home. Baraboo is nestled between large, hilly bluffs with a river running through the middle of town. Large numbers of waterfowl are associated by the river area. A walk down to the river provided a perfect spot to journal with opportunities to see the contrast of natural and manmade elements in their environment. The youth sat alone in silence for fifteen minutes while observing the habitat around them. They used their senses to become fully in tune with the surroundings. Complete freedom was given to them for their recordings which included writing, drawing, sketching and doodling. At first there was no enthusiasm for the activity but by the end the kids were noticing things they never had before and enjoying the activity. In addition, BBGC and 4-H Afterschool will be assessing the needs of the middle school to determine the demand for an afterschool program. The goal is to start a middle school after school program to keep unsupervised youth from getting involved in risky behavior during after school hours.