

A very important part of the volunteer program is recognition of the volunteer. Sometimes we get so used to them being around that we forget they are not being paid for their services. Statistics show that volunteers are more likely to stay if they are recognized for their efforts. It doesn't need to be anything expensive. Here are some ideas to say 'thank you!'.

W K H O R Z

- Attach the following note to a box of candles: "No one looks a candle to you."
- Send a 'thought you'd like to know' letter to the volunteer's employer, acknowledging his or her positive volunteer contribution.
- Ask volunteers or staff members to train other volunteers to lead meetings, give presentations, etc.
- Forget separate luncheons for deserving staff and volunteers. Bring them together for a joint recognition lunch in their honor. Be creative when you get together to recognize volunteers. Try a potluck where everyone brings a yummy food dish, or have an Ice Cream Bash (everyone brings condiments to make sundaes, banana splits), or have an office barbecue or pizza party.

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difference in your organization over the past year.

The following ideas are from Patty Shumway, Oregon State Volunteer Coordinator

- Your great work has me wreathed in smiles! (small wreath)
- You're the apple of my eye! (basket of apples)
- Your vision is our guiding light! (flashlight)
- You have given our project the sweet smell of success! (potpourri or sachet packet)
- Thanks for getting me out of a jam (jar of jam)
- A toast to a job well done! (plastic wine glass filled with jelly beans or other candy)
- We'd go nuts without you! (jar of nuts)
- That was a honey of an idea! (container of honey)
- You are our ticket to success! (movie ticket or ticket to some other event)
- You spiced up our project! (various spices)
- It's a real treat to have you on our team. (various treats)

Timing of recognition is crucial. Time delays weaken the impact of recognition. Remember to recognize volunteers all through the year and let them know how much we appreciate their efforts. After all, where would we be without our volunteers?

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Earth Team, Public Affairs Conference Sets Challenges in New Orleans

Chief Knight Speaks To Both Groups

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New Orleans hosted a joint Earth Team and Public Affairs Conference Aug. 4-7. Earth Team Coordinators had a full week of activities, and the Public Affairs Specialists met for the first time in four years.

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Earth Team

NRCS Chief Bruce Knight spoke to both groups and spent additional time at the conference. For the Earth Team Coordinators, Chief Knight emphasized the successes and importance of our volunteer program. He talked about the more than one-million hours of volunteer service Earth Team contributed in 2002, and how that helps accomplish tasks related to the Farm Bill. "We are gm ume are g M

West Tennessee Success Story

The Haywood County Field Office in Brownsville – West Tennessee’s Area 1 – is fortunate to have the assistance of Earth Team Volunteer Jason Porch this year. Jason is paying his way through the University of Tennessee Martin by working nights at a restaurant. A senior majoring in Natural Resources Management, Jason became an Earth Team Volunteer in June, 2003 to gain first-hand experience in the conservation field.

Jason volunteered over 150 hours in one and a half months. He also helped to keep three major construction projects running smoothly. He spent several days assisting the staff with construction supervision and inspection of a large grade control structure in the Richland Creek Project.



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Other projects include the layout of approximately 20,000 feet of terraces and pipe installation, and checkout of a shallow water area wildlife. He assisted with status reviews on 8 – 10 CRP contracts, and also assisted with the design survey of a sediment basin that will protect the local Wal-Mart from sedimentation in its parking lot.

The Brownsville Field Office is very appreciative of Jason’s volunteer work. He is a valuable asset. Jason plans to continue to serve as an Earth Team Volunteer, and hopes to log 1,000 hours by the time he graduates from UT Martin.

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Oklahoma’s 52nd Annual National Land and Range Judging Contest

Over 140 teams of teenage Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H members competed in the 52nd annual National Land and Range Judging Contest, May 7-9, 2003, in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Royce Casey of Kiowa, Oklahoma, is currently President of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD), and the contest’s principal sponsor. “We had teams from over 35 states competing this year,” Casey said.

The idea of a land judging contest was invented by three Oklahoma Conservationists in 1942. They decided which soil qualities could be judged and developed score cards to test skills. The idea caught on, and Oklahoma City has been hosting the national contest since 1952.



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The 4-H and FFA participating teams qualified for the national event by placing among the top five teams at contests held in their home states. The teams match skills in judging the adaptability of land for various purposes, including farming, range management, and home site construction. An adult category is provided to allow coaches, team alternates, and others interested in soil to compete.

The contestants take turns examining the soil in pits and trenches dug especially for the contest. The skills the teens test at the contest involve principles that can be valuable in career fields like environmental and agricultural management, natural resource conservation, home building, and construction. The actual contest site remains a secret until contest day, so no one has an unfair advantage. Contestants and coaches gather on contest morning to find out the official contest location. They then travel to the site, with a police escort, in a caravan

of over 100 cars spanning several miles. This year’s Land and Range Judging Contest was held May 9th at the J.L. Mitch Park in Edmond.

Earth Team Volunteers from Oklahoma and some of the surrounding states worked at the three-day event. These volunteers helped with many different aspects of the contest, making it the outstanding success.



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Everett Cole, SCS retiree, helps with the event every year and is appreciated by the Oklahoma NRCS staff because of his willingness to do what needs to be done, and also because of his expertise in this area. Thanks to Earth Team Volunteers like Cole, Oklahoma will continue the tradition and quality defined by this yearly contest.

Louisiana’s BAYOU Program



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During June, 2003, a group of Earth Team Volunteers, high school students and college freshmen participated in the BAYOU Program (Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunity Unit) associated with Southern University in Louisiana. Southern University and NRCS have an agreement to provide agricultural information and experience to the students, with the goal of guiding them toward an agricultural career. The group stayed at the NRCS Plant Materials Center in Galliano, LA., and received valuable information on careers with USDA NRCS, FSA and RD. The group donated their time planting Blue Stem, Sea Oats and Bitter Panicum along the coastline at Foucheon Beach, Terrebonne Parish in Louisiana.

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brush and the messiest storage rooms are nothing compared to controlling children at 4-H2O!

In summation, I had a good time during my volunteer experience. I learned many things about conservation, engineering, surveying and government programs, not to mention the useful experience I gained in hiking in rough terrain, organizing storage rooms, camp counseling, and being prepared for the unexpected. Though I do not know whether I will pursue conservation as a career, I know I will not soon forget my summer as an Earth Team Volunteer.

Wyoming Earth Team Volunteer Challenges You to ‘Think Outside The Box’



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Deck Hunter is an NRCS Earth Team Volunteer. A retired teacher, author, and former wilderness ranger, she is sharing her love of the outdoors and wildlife with other ‘Wyomingites’ who are dedicated to implementing conservation practices that help attract wildlife, regardless of limited resources.

Hunter is conducting workshops (she refers to the workshops as “Chats”) on how to become a backyard conservationist. She encourages citizens to counteract the loss of natural habitat through subdivision, commercial, and community development. She stresses that wildlife habitat can be developed in small patios and/or on large

ranches.

Programs include winter feeding, nesting boxes and houses, plants, trees, and shrubs that attract wildlife. She also advises on developing butterfly gardens and methods to attract hummingbirds.

‘Chat’ follow-up includes personal visits to the backyard wildlife habitat sites to provide further assistance if needed. One example is an apartment dweller in a senior citizen housing complex who wanted to attract birds to her very small yard. Hunter suggested some slight modifications to enhance the yard. The efforts were completed and proved successful. With Hunter’s encouragement, the lady applied for, and received, the “Backyard Conservationist” sign through the NRCS, which she proudly displays!

Hunter provides assistance in many different arenas including providing presentations at local county fairs and garden clubs. Her assistance and insight are also sought from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Habitat Team. Outreach also includes radio station spots and a newspaper column dedicated to backyard conservation and increasing wildlife habitats.

Her programs include historical background and mission information on NRCS and the agency’s Volunteer Program, the Earth Team. She is always sure to acknowledge local conservation districts and the assistance they provide.

Before each workshop, Hunter develops colored fliers on her personal computer and prints them out using her own paper. The fliers include credits for NRCS and conservation district sponsorship in the area in which the workshop is held. With the exception of duplication and publicity assistance she receives from NRCS, Hunter provides all materials without any financial sponsorship.

Hunter helps citizens think ‘outside of the box’ when devising plans and ideas for conservation practices that can be used on areas as small as a backyard patio to large, multi-acre properties. Her enthusiasm and dedication to helping NRCS achieve it’s mission is revered by a large percentage of the state’s citizens.

The Connecticut Earth Team 100 Club

Connecticut NRCS employees Todd Bobowick, Seth Lerman and Mark Cummings were recently honored, thanked and inducted into the “Gctvj"Vgc o"322"Enwd0” This newly developed program honors NRCS employees who have recruited 100 or more Earth Team Volunteers.



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Todd and Seth received this honor for recruiting and training Earth Team Volunteers for the Connecticut ‘Streamwalk’ program. This program provides lessons and instructions, in classroom and field settings, for collecting data and evaluating the current conditions of rivers and streams. Upon collection of the data, a management plan is developed to restore, enhance and preserve the natural resources in, and along, the river system.

Mark Cummings was inducted into the Earth Team 100 Club for training volunteers for RC&D projects. Some of those projects include:



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- Beacon Falls River Access Project
- Danbury River Trail and Canoe Ramp Project
- Branford Rain Garden Project
- Horse Environmental Awareness Program-BMP Demonstration Project
- Timber Bridge Installation Project
- River Greenway Project

These are just a ‘few’ of the projects Mark has been working on! Each recipient received a framed Sarah Minor American Flag Earth Team print.

Stream Visual Assessment Protocol in Oregon

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David (DJ) Lloyd, a senior at Catlain Gable High School in Portland, OR, and an Earth Team Volunteer, wanted to do his senior project on water quality issues. He got in touch with Deborah Virgovic, Oregon NRCS Fisheries Biologist, who signed him up as an Earth Team Volunteer, got him into a pair of waders, and into a stream. Actually, it was a ditch that flowed through the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Oregon NRCS is assisting the USFWS by completing conservation plans on three Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Hal Gordon, Oregon State Economist, is the lead planner for the Ankeny NWR, so Hal tagged along and became DJ's assistant.

DJ completed the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol □ aQgged by tey Nationam □

Mississippi Earth Team Volunteer April Haynes Provides a Learning Experience

When NRCS began recruiting Earth Team Volunteers in the mid '80's, there lived, in the heart of the Mississippi Delta, a young lady interested in spreading the word on natural resources conservation. April Haynes is one of more than fifty Earth Team Volunteers involved in educating students and teachers about natural resources conservation. The Marks Field Office is fortunate to have April, along with other volunteers, to assist in this work.

Each year April looks forward to greeting the boys and girls who come to Natural Resources Field Day for educational study shop. For the past two years, April and two college students helped present information on soil and water conservation. Everyone gains from their learning encounters with April and the Quitman County Earth Team.

In July, April was recognized for her outstanding Earth Team work as the Area's Outstanding Earth Team Individual. The Quitman County Earth Team was recognized as the Area's Outstanding Earth Team Group. Conservation truly has a lifetime friend and educator in April and the entire Quitman County Earth Team!

Interpretive Center, Carroll County, IN

On Saturday, June 7, 2003, 130 Earth Team Volunteers in Carroll County, IN, were recognized for their hard work the past year on making preparations for the July 4th grand opening of a new Wabash and Erie Canal Interpretive Center. The volunteers were treated to a 'sneak preview' of the new center as part of the recognition ceremony.



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Team Leader Dan McCain and the volunteers have made tremendous contributions to Carroll County throughout the years. They have resurrected many remnants of the old canal and transformed these previously neglected 'eye sores' into beautiful parks and walking trails. The addition of the Interpretive Center will make Carroll County a 'must see' destination for canal and history buffs alike.

Charleston, SC Earth Team Volunteers Help Defend Dunes

So-called re-nourishment of eroded beaches often involves the scraping or moving of sand by bulldozers and backhoes, or projects that dump a line of rocks perpendicular to the beach to try to slow the migration of sand.

But locals are taking a more proactive, grass-roots approach to fighting erosion, while also working to beautify the beaches. In April 2003, Earth Team Volunteers helped plant 2,200 sea oat plants along a half-mile of freshly created dunes on the northern end of the island. Last year, Isle of Palms public works employees and volunteers installed sand fences along the stretch to capture sand and build up the dunes.

The erosion control project is the latest undertaken by the local office of the USDA/ Natural Resources Conservation Service. "This is something a beach community can do to help protect its beach", said Bill Wilkes, Volunteer Project Manager. "The state and some beach towns will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a re-nourishment project, but for a fraction of the cost, they can install sand fences and plant sea oats. Sea oats have tremendous root systems-I've seen some six feet deep-and that's where the stability of the dunes comes from".

He added, however, that certain beach areas aren't suitable for sand fencing. For example, fencing must be on the beach above the 'high water' mark. Sea oats, which don't show their true glory until summer and fall, are protected by state law. Anyone who harms a plant faces a \$200 fine or 30 days in jail. The state protects the plant species not because they are threatened or endangered, but because people are drawn to their beauty and like to take some as souvenirs.

Linda Lovvorn Tucker, Isle of Palms City Administrator says, "I'm definitely a believer in the sand fencing and sea oats. Certainly, erosion is cyclical. But we can help nurture it. Vegetation helps keep it there....it certainly beats bulldozers scraping the beach."

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319 Project at Red River Louisiana Research Center



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A 319 Grant was secured to build an NRCS-designed wetland to study runoff from approximately 400 acres of agricultural land from the Red River Research Station. Research data obtained from this project will provide information in water quality as it filters through the wetland. The results will determine if this project could be used to help clean up water runoff from agricultural land before it is discharged.

On June 10, 2003, a group of Earth Team Volunteers from Shreveport Green, Shreveport, LA, personnel from the research station and NRCS in Benton, LA, met and collected 250 plants including smartweed, duck potato, and beakrush. These plants were dug up on an existing wetland site and potted for later planting.

After the levees and water control structures are built, the plants will be planted in designated areas and in the wetland to filter water and improve water quality.

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Earth Team Volunteers Help Out At The National Conference

Two volunteers from the National Earth Team office in Ankeny provided over 40 hours each of volunteer service at this year's Earth Team/Public Affairs Specialists National Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Jennifer Wittenberg and Nicole Haynes provided endless support to the staff and to attendees by helping out with registration, running errands and delivering gifts and boxes, decorating the Command Center and tracking down help when they didn't have the answers.

Jennifer is a new volunteer and this was her first 'assignment.' Nicole has been an Earth Team Volunteer for a little over two years. Both Jennifer and Nicole were recognized for their efforts at the Recognition Event held on Monday, August 4th.

Thanks again
Jennifer and Nicole!

High Idaho Day



In October 2002, the Idaho East Side SWCD and Earth Team Volunteers helped rancher Claude Storer with funding to install erosion-control devices into his stream bank on the Gray's Lake Outlet, north of Gray's Lake in Bonneville County. Storer turned to the East Side SWCD when his stream bank needed repair beyond what the federal and state cost share programs cover. The money comes from a unique grant authorized by the Idaho Legislature. District and Natural Resources Conservation Service employees, as well as Earth Team Volunteers, helped with the technical assistance and the labor to demonstrate what any landowner can do with grant money. District Conservationist Dennis Hadley says many may benefit from this grant. "We use this fund for installing the less known erosion controlling practices, such as tree revetments, that are a wonderful way to slow stream bank erosion." In addition, sedge/rush plugs and willow plantings were installed. These practices protect the bank from high flows by reducing the amount of energy directed towards the streambank, while encouraging sediment deposition for new plant growth. Plant vigor and composition are the key factors for long-term streambank stabilization.

This project involved approximately 450 cuttings along 1,000 feet of eroded streambank and took approximately 5 hours to complete.

Marla Tribble, a local landowner and an Earth Team Volunteer at the Idaho Falls office submitted the following poem highlighting her experiences on this project.

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