

CONNECTION

The voice of the Earth Team volunteer.

Trust in a Proven Program: Earth Team

By Astor Boozer, Regional Conservationist - West



Astor Boozer, Regional Conservationist - West (right, front), presents the 2012 National Earth Team Group Volunteer Award to teacher Carrie Trimble at the Cañon City High School in Colorado. Photo courtesy of Cañon City Daily Record/Carie Canterbury.

Recently I had the privilege of presenting the 2012 Earth Team Group Volunteer Award to the Cañon City High School Environmental Club and Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) at their school in Colorado. I met and talked to these teenagers and their teachers and I was able to see the work they did to revegetate a scarred and neglected hillside.

Soil erosion was taking a toll and the hillside needed its vegetation restored. District Conservationist Rick Romano and his team from the Fremont NRCS office developed a plan with the city's park department and enlisted the help of the school. Tools and seed were donated and our Earth Team volunteers braved cold spring weather in April 2011 to prepare the ground for planting. It was hard work on steep terrain but the students did a wonderful job under tough conditions and their work is truly worthy of a national award.

At NRCS, we obviously saw this effort as an Earth Team success. The students, however, looked at it as a failure because the native seed planted a year ago has not emerged. I told them to have faith. With enough time and the right conditions native grasses will grow and flourish. Soon, I said, their hard work will be rewarded with a carpet of green, soil saving native grasses and there will be additional wildlife habitat and environmental benefits for area residents.

This story reminded me of the fact our conservation work requires us to place our trust in sound science, effective programs and thoughtful recommendations. As a result, private landowners and partners place their confidence in us to help them do right by the land. This trust flows to the Earth Team program. NRCS volunteers, like the Cañon City students, choose to join us in our environmental work. They believe in what we're doing and they work with us.

We all know there is plenty to do. Besides our normal workload we have taken on national initiatives with a focus of addressing local resource concerns involving wildlife and water quality and quantity. Earth Team volunteers want to help us. Get them working on the Ogallala Aquifer, Lesser Prairie Chicken, and Sage Grouse Initiatives. They can conduct conservation education programs, assist with rangeland restoration, and help with water conservation work; all designed to support our initiatives. Be creative. Bring Earth Team volunteers into your office and have them assist you with your conservation challenges.

Earth Team is a proven program with proven tools. Conduct a needs assessment, talk to your area or state volunteer coordinator, and get help from the national Earth Team office. Have faith, use this program to help you and your office get more conservation work done. Plant the seeds of Earth Team and, with time and the right care and conditions, your office's volunteer program will grow and flourish just like that Colorado hillside.

Take Credit and Capture Hours for What You are Already Doing!

By Bonnie Allely, National Volunteer Liaison

Has your spouse or other family member assisted with an NRCS event such as a conservation tour or field day? Did a farmer or landowner assist you with conservation layout or implementation? Have students from a local high school or college assisted your office on conservation activities to gain experience or school credit? Have you had a committee of folks help plan an NRCS event such as a landowners meeting? Did you have friends help staff an NRCS exhibit at a career fair or local fair? If any of these examples are familiar the next question I have for you is, "Did you sign these folks up as Earth Team volunteers and record their hours?"



Bonnie Allely

In today's budget climate, no one in NRCS can't afford not to take credit for the volunteers that are helping NRCS accomplish our mission of putting conservation on the ground. Accountability is very important to our agency, Congress and to our future

generations. It is important we demonstrate what goes into our conservation projects and what the results are. For the Earth Team, the lessons are very simple: we must count every hour of our Earth Team volunteers and we must sign up all volunteers into the Earth Team Program.

Offices already have volunteers; they're friends, family members, students and elected officials engaged in conservation activities outside of their elected duties. Volunteers work on big, small and one-time projects. When they're assisting an NRCS employee with an agency activity, sign them up as Earth Team volunteers and count their hours. Show management, the agency and, ultimately Congress, the value that Earth Team volunteers bring to your office and to the Nation.

The NRCS goal for the Earth Team in FY2012 is 100% office participation. So look around at those folks helping you and make sure your offices' volunteers are members of Earth Team and their hours are being counted.

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Students Earn Experience as Earth Team Volunteers

Volunteering Through the Camera's Lens

By Dianne Johnson, Visual Information Assistant, NRCS, Columbus, Ohio



USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack (left) and Earth Team volunteer Alex Snyder in Ohio.

Graduate student Alex Snyder is an Ohio Earth Team volunteer who finds inspiration through the lens of his camera. While completing his graduate degree at Ohio University, Snyder found time to volunteer his photographic talents by capturing Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's four visits to Ohio.

Snyder learned at a young age the value of volunteering from his grandparents who volunteered for years in the Ohio park system. Snyder's love of photography began while spending his summers helping park officials and visitors in Ohio's Hocking Hills, a naturally scenic region of southeastern Ohio.

"At 12 years old, I took up photography and found an inspiration to succeed that has proved to be my ticket to see the world," Snyder said.

Snyder studied in Europe through Ohio University and he has completed photo journalism assignments in Scotland and other parts of the world. He has a successful career in commercial, wildlife, and conservation photography and his images have been published by National Geographic Travel, US Airways, and Great Lakes Publishing to name a few.

His work can be viewed at <http://nikonalex.zenfolio.com/>.

Students Learn Forestry First Hand

By Patricia Paul, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, Virginia

For at least one student—Hanah Desherow—the Earth Team volunteer program was a life changing experience. Desherow plans on attending Northern Virginia Community College in the fall with one goal in mind – a career in natural resource conservation.

Desherow took part in a local forestry program put on by NRCS employees and Virginia's Loudoun County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). For years they have been helping local high school students from the Monroe Technology Center learn about forestry. They help students gain practical field experience as part of the curriculum which includes a visit to a local farm.

"Students begin their studies with classroom instruction and labs," says NRCS District Conservationist Larry Wilkinson. "In the late fall each year we take the kids out to a local farm with mature hardwood stands so they can see a wide variety of trees and practice their tree identification skills."

Farmer Mark Furr recently discussed his operation with visiting students and described some of the challenges he faces in raising crops and cattle. "Cattle trampled the banks along a stream that runs through the property and they were damaging the woods above the pasture," said Furr. "With technical and financial help from NRCS, we fenced 23 acres to keep the cattle out of the stream and the woodland and help protect these resources."

Furr found wet areas along the stream made it difficult

to keep a good covering of grass. Wilkinson suggested planting trees or shrubs to help anchor the grass and better protect against erosion. Twelve enthusiastic Monroe Technology Center forestry students helped plant two-and-a-half acres of trees, grasses and shrubs, during their time as Earth Team volunteers.

"I loved having the students here," says Furr. "They did a great job. The plants are guarding against erosion and protecting the stream."



Earth Team volunteer Hanah Desherow plants a tree and now plans a career in conservation.

Students Earn Experience as Earth Team Volunteers

Engineering Graduate Becomes Volunteer

By David Ramirez, Civil Engineer, Hanford, California

Blair Bain is working as an Earth Team volunteer to gain engineering experience. A graduate of the California State University (CSU), Fresno civil engineering program, Bain has been volunteering in the Hanford, Calif., field office since September 2010. His goal is to become an agriculture engineer with NRCS. He volunteers to learn USDA-NRCS programs and develop networking opportunities. His main duties include preliminary plan check of micro-irrigation systems and engineering field inspections.

Prior to attending CSU Fresno, Bain trained as a classical chef at the California School of Culinary Arts. He worked as a sous chef (an executive chef's second-in-command) for a number of years until he realized he needed more long term stability in his life by earning a civil engineering degree.

Staff says Bain is a motivated Earth Team volunteer and he assists the office in any way he can.



Blair Bain

Earth Team Internship Gives Student Work Experience

By Quenna Terry and Trisha Williams, Texas NRCS Public Affairs

Trisha Williams, an agricultural communications student at Texas Tech University (TTU) started a semester internship working as an Earth Team volunteer. She assisted the public affairs staff in Lubbock to gain natural resource communications experience.

She worked under the supervision of Quenna Terry, the NRCS Public Affairs Specialist in the Lubbock zone office.

Williams was nominated to serve in the Peace Corps in Sub Saharan Africa for 27 months. During her service abroad, she will be working in the field of applied agriculture to improve conservation methods and agricultural safety in the community.

Williams said she strongly encourages others to seek internships and volunteer opportunities, especially while they are in school. "While you're in school, it is easy to become overwhelmed," Williams said, "but, being an Earth Team volunteer is something that looks great on your resume and is exciting and fun."



Trisha Williams

Student's Specialized Interest Helps Endangered Species

By Jennifer Anderson-Cruz, Iowa NRCS Biologist

This past winter, NRCS asked for Earth Team volunteers interested in assisting with the development of habitat restoration and management guide sheets for endangered species. Dr. Fred Janzen of Iowa State University put NRCS Biologist Jennifer Anderson-Cruz in touch with David Brady, a senior undergraduate student majoring in animal ecology.

David's experience conducting scientific literature searches and interpreting scientific findings was a perfect fit for the task NRCS was hoping to accomplish. Furthermore, David has a strong interest in reptiles and amphibians, collectively known as herpetofauna, one of the most endangered groups of animals in Iowa.

"I was thrilled when my herpetology professor told me of an opportunity to work with Earth Team on restoration and management guide sheets for threatened/endangered species of Iowa. Pouring through research on species such as the Massasauga rattlesnake and Wood turtle has provided fascinating insight into their habitat preferences and activity patterns. Pulling from different research articles to create concise guide sheets has also

allowed me to help protect these fantastic members of the Animal Kingdom," said Brady.

"The ability to reach out to Earth Team volunteers, like David who can assist us, is very important to our agency," said Anderson-Cruz. "Earth Team volunteers gain valuable experience working with specialists in their field of study. Their volunteer efforts demonstrate a special passion for their work and they develop networking and industry contacts, which will help them advance their careers."



David Brady and "friends."

Students Earn Experience as Earth Team Volunteers

Texas Earth Team Volunteer Faces Challenges and Grows

By Melissa Blair, Zone 3 Public Affairs Specialist

Just like the plants in the People’s Garden he waters in front of the Cameron County NRCS office, Danny Ramos has blossomed and grown during his six years as a volunteer with the Earth Team program. While growing up in Harlingen, south Texas, and helping his father with the horses and cattle, Ramos developed a love and appreciation of the land. He wanted to continue working with livestock and the land, so he started taking agricultural classes at Texas State Technical College (TSTC) where he learned about NRCS’ Earth Team volunteer program and signed up in 2006.

For many Earth Team volunteers, conservation outreach is an exciting part of their duties. It’s a time to meet new people at events and tell them about NRCS. However, for Ramos, it was not exciting; in fact it was downright frightening. Ramos suffered an illness as a child and has overcome many challenges, including communicating with other people, throughout his 25 years of life to get to where he is today.

“When Danny came to volunteer, he wouldn’t look at any of us in the face and rarely spoke; he was extremely bashful,” said Oz Longoria, district conservationist for Cameron County NRCS. “Danny now interacts with the staff and landowners that come into the office. He is able to help our NRCS staff and the soil and water conservation district secretary with filing, copying, binding reports, and other responsibilities.”

Danny’s parents, Joe and Virginia Ramos, have seen the positive benefits the Earth Team Volunteer program has had on their son as he has become more outspoken and has made new friends.

“We are glad he found a place to work with Earth Team,” said Virginia Ramos. “He has learned a lot from the Agency and the employees

that help him. Danny has made a big change. He is more open around people and has learned to do more work in different things.”

Ramos also knows the personal benefits his volunteer work has on his education. He has learned about protecting our natural resources which has helped him with his classes at TSTC, where he is working to complete his certificate in agriculture. Ramos also participates in the TSTC Agriculture Club on campus.

“I tell my friends and others that this is a great opportunity to volunteer and as a career too,” said Ramos. “NRCS helps people help the land so they can continue in

agriculture. NRCS has helped me by teaching me how to help others.”

Ramos hopes one day to work with NRCS since he enjoys working with the landowners and visiting the ranches. He likes what he has learned as an Earth Team volunteer, such as loading equipment to take to the field, tending the plants at the NRCS office and keeping the equipment and trucks clean.



Danny Ramos (far right), Earth Team volunteer in the San Benito, Texas, NRCS Field Office, works with Oz Longoria (left), and Gabe Cavazos.

Earth Team Volunteers Gain Careers in Conservation

Earth Team Volunteer Offered NRCS Job in Hawaii

By Julie MacSwain, Minnesota State Volunteer Coordinator

Earth Team volunteer Aaron Janz has a new job. The Minnesota man is packing his bags and moving to Hawaii. He will continue his conservation work with NRCS as a full-time, paid employee of the agency in the Nation's 50th state.

Janz is originally from North St. Paul. During the summer of 2010, he stopped at the NRCS Minnesota State Fair booth, talked to staff and became interested in learning more about NRCS and its mission.

Later that fall, Janz worked with three Minnesota NRCS soil scientists on a technical writing project for a University of Wisconsin-River Falls class he was taking. Caryl Radatz, state soil scientist, Michael Whited and Kathryn DesForge offered Janz help with his assignment and they encouraged him to consider a career in conservation. They offered job-related

suggestions and soon Janz chose to major in soils. He signed up as an Earth Team volunteer and began to work with Radatz developing materials to support a statewide soil health campaign. Soon he became known for his can-do-attitude and willingness to take on assignments involving soil health.

In early May 2012, Janz said that "volunteering for NRCS has been a positive experience and someday he hopes to work for the agency." Now that he has been hired by the agency he can say his Earth Team experience has helped him reach his employment goal.



Minnesota Earth Team volunteer Aaron Janz (left), tells State Soil Scientist Caryl Radatz and Minnesota State Conservationist Don Baloun he will be leaving in June. Janz has accepted a position with NRCS in Hawaii.

Earth Team Volunteers Gain Careers in Conservation

Earth Team Volunteer Hired by Conservation District

By Mary L. Clayton, Area Volunteer Coordinator for Northeast Arkansas



Amanda Carrell

Amanda Carrell credits the Earth Team with starting her conservation career as a district employee in Arkansas.

Amanda graduated in May 2012 with a bachelor's degree in plant and soil science from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. One of her professors told her about the Earth Team volunteer program and suggested she contact Robert (Bob) Young, assistant state conservationist for field operations, in the Jonesboro area office. She signed up and began volunteering weekly.

Amanda helped with several projects including getting cross sections of ditches, wetland determinations and delineations, and a 700-acre wetland restoration on the Black River.

"It's very rewarding to know I assisted with these conservation plans and that I will be able to see their benefits in the near future," said Carrell.

A combination of Carrell's volunteer experience and education, helped her land a career at the Craighead County Conservation District as a Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative technician.

"I am very grateful that my experience as an Earth Team volunteer helped me start my conservation career," said Carrell. "I look forward to helping people help the land."

Volunteer Work Leads to Full-time Position

By Shaun Anderson, Earth Team Volunteer, Wisconsin State Office

In December 2010, I graduated with a degree in environmental engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Platteville. As a new graduate, I eagerly set out to find full-time employment, but the current economic slump meant there were very few jobs in my field. I spent months looking for engineering work without success.

A friend, who had experienced similar circumstances, told me about the Earth Team. She had volunteered with the NRCS and had been able to gain practical work experience while enjoying her time as a volunteer. I looked into the Earth Team and I began to realize that it was an excellent opportunity as I could gain valuable engineering field experience while continuing to look for full-time employment. I contacted Barb Jansen, volunteer coordinator at the Wisconsin NRCS state office and she directed me to Scott Mueller, Wisconsin NRCS assistant state conservation engineer.

In November 2011, I began volunteering 16 hours a week working on a few design spreadsheets for manure storage and plunge pools with Scott. I also worked on a new construction specification for aggregate base and a variety of other projects. Each project was challenging and fun and they allowed me to put my degree and past experience to work for a wonderful cause.

In February 2012, I was offered a full-time position with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as a design and construction engineer. During the hiring process, my interviewers were impressed by my ability to stay active in the engineering field despite the lack of opportunities. I believe being an NRCS volunteer tipped the scales in my favor and I was hired.

The Earth Team was a great experience for me. I highly recommend it to anyone who is in a similar employment situation or looking to do a little something extra to protect the environment.

Groups

Earth Team Volunteers Support South Carolina People's Gardens

By Sabrenna Bryant, South Carolina State Volunteer Coordinator

South Carolina NRCS celebrated Earth Day with two events involving Earth Team volunteers and the spring planting of People's Gardens.

In Columbia, NRCS helped host an Earth Day celebration at Ridgewood Community Park on April 16. The event included Ridgewood community residents, local legislators, agency leaders and high school students, who signed up as Earth Team volunteers for the day, to plant raised garden beds in the park.

The raised garden beds were originally built in 2008 as part of the park's revitalization project and are maintained by local Earth Team volunteers.

"NRCS is proud to participate in projects that help build local communities and have a positive impact on the environment," said Ann English, NRCS State Conservationist. "We've partnered with the Ridgewood community in the past and it is inspiring to see them taking pride in the garden. Starting another year of People's Garden participation is a great way to celebrate



Elyse Benson, South Carolina NRCS outreach coordinator (left), and Amy Overstreet, state public affairs specialist, present a People's Garden sign to participating local group.

Earth Day."

In Greenwood, NRCS and Earth Team volunteers joined with the Little River Baptist Brotherhood Association to host an Earth Day celebration on April 18 and to start work on their 2012 People's Garden. Last year the group donated a recorded 1,500 pounds of produce to a number of charities. This year the association doubled the size of their garden site to nearly three-and-a-

half acres and they hope their bigger garden will lead to greater donations.

Soil Conservationist Elyse Benson, an outreach coordinator and the 2011 South Carolina Area Earth Team Coordinator of the Year said, "This Earth Day event is about celebrating the earth's blessings. The Brotherhood is very generous and their entire garden is about fellowship and caring for others. In many ways, that's what the Earth Team program is all about, too."

Iowa Earth Team Volunteers Focus on Education

By Carolyn Dirksen, State Secretary, Allison, Iowa

The 28th Annual Butler Center/Clay Prairie Flower Walk took place in mid-May thanks to many volunteers including Earth Team volunteers Marge Freese and Judy Lindaman. We focused on the theme "Soil to Spoon" and at least 100 students from different schools attended the event.

The University of Northern Iowa conducted prairie tours for the students and we had a number of educational stations to engage them in conservation activities. We demonstrated different textures of soil and soil layers and helped students plant pumpkin seeds in containers to take home.



Earth Team volunteer Marge Freese works with Iowa students at a conservation education station.

Family Members

Wife of NRCS Employee Recognized for Volunteer Service

By Mary Giles, Missouri State Volunteer Coordinator

Married couples are known to share. When Beverly Brejcha married Robert Brejcha in 1969, his passion to save soil and water became hers. Robert was a soil conservationist in Stockton, Kansas, (Rooks County) and there was no official volunteer organization for the Soil Conservation Service at the time.

“In 1970 there was a big debate about whether or not I should be allowed to work in the office,” Beverly said. “Fortunately Area Conservationist Tom Dickens was quoted as saying, ‘Best move we ever made was hiring Robert; we got two for the price of one!’”

Beverly began volunteering and she has worked in every office her husband has been assigned to. They now live in Clay County, Missouri.

Beverly says she does a little bit of everything as an Earth Team volunteer. “I enter survey notes on the computer, help complete engineering

drawings, copy forms, assemble file folders, assist walk-ins looking for aerial photos, floodplain maps, soil surveys, and plat maps.”

She says her favorite outdoor volunteer experience was helping build a 7,575-foot terrace and her favorite office work is answering phone calls. “I especially like getting phone calls from people who call the office because they can’t find in the phone book the government agency or organization they need,” she said.

This year Beverly completes 42 years of official and unofficial volunteer service. Mary Giles, Missouri state volunteer coordinator said, “This is an amazing accomplishment. Beverly is an exceptional member of the Earth Team family and she and Robert inspire us all. They show us what is possible when there is a passion for conservation and a commitment to improve the environment.”



Beverly Brejcha is celebrating 42 years of volunteer service to conservation.

Fiancé Helps Future Husband Serve Up Conservation Treats

By Liz Warner, Nevada Public Affairs Specialist

The Smith Valley NRCS office in southwest Nevada sponsored an educational event during Earth Day activities at the Smith Valley School. Students were guided through several hands-on activities, such as planting seeds, identifying soil types, and wildlife habitats. NRCS Soil Scientist Matt Cole and his fiancé, Joyce Kammersell, an Earth Team volunteer, delighted students by offering them samples of “mud to eat.”

Cole said, “We used crushed-up Cocoa Rice Krispies to represent the smaller clay particles in soil and non-crushed Cocoa Rice Krispies to represent the larger sand particles in soil.

We then poured milk on each to represent rain water infiltrating the soil. The kids could then see how much faster the “rain water” soaked through the sandy (uncrushed) versus the clay (crushed) soil. This helped illustrate the impact that soil particle size has on plant and water movement in soil. The crushed up Rice Krispies looked like actual soil and since we had actual soil samples to show, we had to tell them that it was not actually soil and that they could eat it.”



Nevada NRCS Soil Scientist Matt Cole and his fiancé, Earth Team volunteer Joyce Kammersell, make a water quality point with edible soil during an Earth Day school demonstration.

Wisconsin Earth Team Volunteers Scan Slides to Speed Service

By Rachel Geiselman, Area Earth Team Coordinator

Earth Team volunteer Mary Anderson's work will save the agency substantial time and money for years to come. She has scanned more



Mary Anderson

than 100,000 aerial slides from FSA offices in seven western Wisconsin counties. Soil scientists and other field staff can now look at the digital slides on their computers instead of being forced to drive to the local FSA office, pull the slide and use a projector to look at it.

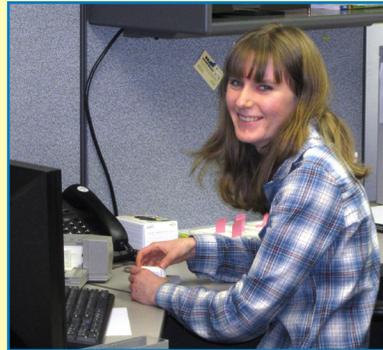
Anderson worked part-time as an Earth Team volunteer to receive training and work experience.

Staff says this major undertaking would not have been accomplished without Anderson's attention to detail and patience. They say they will miss her as she pursues other interests.

By Gary Haughn, District Conservationist, Ashland Service Center

Pamela Roberts learned about the Earth Team Program through local District Conservationist Gary Haughn. She is an aerial photo slide scanning project volunteer at the Ashland NRCS Service Center.

Roberts has conservation experience. In the past, she has worked for a land conservation department and with the Bad



Pamela Roberts

River Indian Tribe. She served as their tribal representative on the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council which works closely with NRCS offices in applying conservation practices on Tribal lands.

Roberts says she is looking to further her work in the conservation field and hopes to eventually work for NRCS.

State Volunteer Coordinator Earns Civil Rights Award

By Lori Pittman, Chairperson, Tennessee Civil Rights Committee, Murfreesboro Area Office

Dimple Geesling, State Volunteer Coordinator, was recently named Tennessee's 2011 Civil Rights Award Recipient.

Geesling was cited for laboring tirelessly to advance Civil Rights and for contributing to the agency's mission of making NRCS the "Employer of Choice".

Geesling received the award based in part on her volunteer coordinator duties.

Coworkers say Geesling was instrumental in training partners and employees on how to successfully recruit and retain volunteers. She was credited with developing yearly Earth Team business plans and working with area coordinators and area conservationists to recognize outstanding volunteers and NRCS employees. As a result, the state saw Earth Team volunteers contribute nearly 22,000 hours during Fiscal Year 2011.



Dimple Geesling

International

International Volunteer Finds Persistence Very Rewarding

By Amalia Castro, Earth Team Volunteer, Kissimmee, Florida

I discovered my interest in soil sciences at Autónoma University of Madrid, Spain, when I took a soils course that included working with USDA's taxonomy. It was not until I joined an exchange program to study in the Wageningen University (the Netherlands) that I was able to learn more about soils and my interest in this field grew.

I decided to extend my knowledge and to be sure that soil science was the field I wanted to work in. One of my teachers encouraged me to take a look at the NRCS website and I thought their volunteer program seemed perfect. I decided to become an Earth Team volunteer.

The process of getting to the U.S. and becoming an Earth Team volunteer was challenging. Luckily the Earth Team staff helped me by showing me the steps to follow. I never would have been able to do it without the emotional and financial support of my Spanish and American families. It was really important that they trusted me and, once here, my relatives made me feel at home.

I have been able to experience many things at the Kissimmee field office. My supervisor has taken me to the field where he explained different farming and ranching practices and how our conservation work helps improve their operations and the environment. I learned about prescribed burning, chopping

and irrigation systems. We were even able to see threatened species like bald eagles.

Besides clerical work, I also help the office by processing contracts and digitalizing data with GIS. I have been able to attend a workshop on water quality and I will soon travel to the Tavares NRCS office to study and do soils survey work.

I also helped during Earth Day at the Plant Materials Center in Brooksville. I enjoyed touring their facilities and meeting other people from the agency and local farmers and ranchers.

Many times I have been asked why I was so persistent to work at an unpaid position. To me, this is simply a great chance to develop my skills and knowledge about a subject I am passionate about. It also allows me to work with one of the most prestigious organizations in the world. Now I am able to understand the theory behind the lessons I studied. I very much appreciate

this opportunity to work with NRCS. My experience as an Earth Team volunteer is helping me learn and it is helping me evolve. This experience is something I will keep and be able to apply everywhere I go.

Thank you NRCS and Earth Team.



Soil Conservationist Marco Loperena and Earth Team volunteer Amalia Castro take water flow measurements from a micro irrigation system.

Retirees

Earth Team Volunteer Helps Keep Payments Flowing

By Barb Jansen, Wisconsin State Volunteer Coordinator

Tom Moore is an Earth Team volunteer in the Wisconsin NRCS State Office in Madison thanks to a volunteer program called Retired Senior Volunteer Program or RSVP. This service matches volunteers, 55 and older, to places that share their knowledge, personal interests, experience and energy.

Moore retired from a successful career as a partner in a local CPA firm. He returned to the College of Agriculture and Life Science at the UW-Madison and earned a second degree in rural sociology. He has been able to put both of his degrees to work as an Earth Team volunteer working on the state administrative

staff,

“Tom’s work on the Business Tools Team, organizing and reviewing program payments for completeness and accuracy, has helped us meet payment deadlines. He is helping us keep conservation payments flowing to farmers”, said Deb White, state administrative officer.

Moore likes his volunteer work. “I started with Wisconsin NRCS on a one-time project that was supposed to last for one week,” he said. “I’ve ended up staying for over three years so far!”

State office staff say they enjoy working with Tom. “It’s wonderful

to have a retired accountant in our office and we appreciate the way he readily shares his knowledge with us,” said Diane Georgetta, financial management specialist. “We certainly appreciate all of our Earth Team volunteers, however we want to extend a special ‘thank you’ to Tom for his steadfast support.”



Tom Moore

Former Elsberry Plant Materials Center Manager Still Serving

By Ron Cordsiemon, Plant Material’s Center Manager, Elsberry

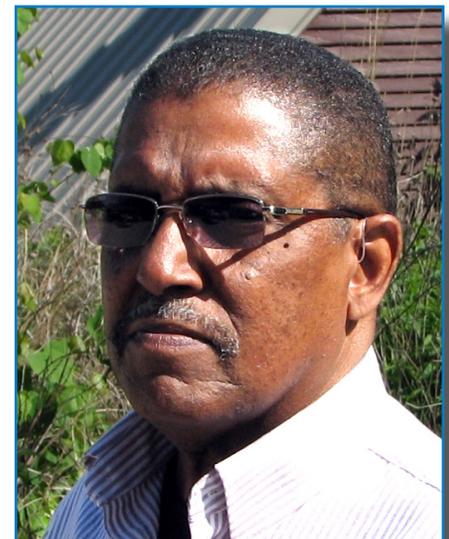
Wednesdays are special days at the Elsberry, Mo., Plant Materials Center (PMC) near St. Louis. Around 9 a.m., employees look for a bright yellow Chevy Camaro carrying Earth Team volunteer Jimmy Henry to pull into the driveway.

Henry is a retired PMC manager and staff value his wealth of experience, ability to work in all facets of the PMC and they appreciate his continued contribution to the center.

Henry retired in 2003. Since then he has been helping his former NRCS coworkers with many tasks including evaluating different grasses, trees and shrubs for several different studies and

the development of technical documents, plant guides, fact sheets and editing technical publications. He also has organized files from past studies, updated out-of-date publications, and compiled information for a PMC outreach plan.

The hours that Jimmy volunteers are an important part of PMC operations. Employees say his wonderful personality, unselfish generosity and ability to connect with people makes him an excellent role model. They value his continued contributions as an Earth Team volunteer.



Jimmy Henry, PMC Earth Team volunteer.

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