

Nicholas Sharp - Area 4 Spotlight Earth Team Volunteer



Nicholas Sharp grew up on a family farm in Sharps Chapel, TN in Union County. The farm used to be a dairy farm but they now produce beef cattle, and in the spring they produce hay. Growing up on the farm, Nicholas had several chores to help out with around the house, ranging from mowing, raking and hauling hay during the spring to grinding crush feed and feeding hay to the cattle in the winter. When the working with the cattle, Nicholas gives them their vaccinations and if some of the equipment tears up he is there to get it going again. Nicholas's work does not stop there, he also helps his dad with the

landscaping business. His grandfather and great grandfather served on the Union County Soil Conservation District (SCD) Board, from 2005-2007 and 1990-2004 respectively.

Nicholas is passionate about agriculture and natural resources, which he vigorously pursues at his high school. As a senior at Union County High School, Nicholas is active in Future Farmers of America and serves as an officer. He has participated in Soil Judging for the past four years and is a member of the Beta Club. In one of Nicholas's classes, they planted pine seedling along the Bull Run Creek behind the school, which is a 303(d) listed stream. He is also taking classes in Natural Resources in high school and plans to continue that into college. Nicholas plans to attend a Tennessee Technical School for the first two years of college as part of the Tennessee Promise Program. This is where he learned about the opportunity to volunteer through the Natural Resources Conservation Service Tennessee Earth Team Volunteer Program. Tennessee Promise Program is a scholarship-based program that helps students with tuition and fees, if they attend any of the state's 13 community colleges, 27 colleges of applied technology, or other eligible institutions. As part of this program, participants have to have 8 hours of community service, which Nicholas chose to do through the Tennessee Earth Team Volunteer Program.

Once Nicholas started with the Earth Team Volunteer Program, he got right to work helping the Union County SCD Secretary, Sandra Greene, with clerical and administrative duties. He also worked hand in hand with Soil Conservation Technician, Bobby Ellison, and District Conservationist, Mike Shoffner, in all aspects of conservation planning. He helped assemble six-part EQIP folders, compiled landowner data from Tennessee property viewer, and gathered supporting information to put in the folders. He assisted in initial farm visits, practice checkout, took before and after pictures of those practices, and got first-hand experience with engineering and design. He has learned about conservation programs like Tennessee Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Resource Conservation Fund and Environmental Quality Incentive Program and how they are applied to working farms. He gave guidance and aided land owners on how to take soil samples and the correct codes to use.

After working with the Tennessee Earth Team, Nicholas plans on perusing a career with NRCS. Nicholas is grateful for the time he has gotten to work with NRCS, "I have gained a lot of knowledge from the Union County Soil Conservation office staff. I have tried to learn as much as I can from this experience and use it in the future." Nicolas has been a great asset and support to the field office in many ways. He has certainly benefitted from this service and is leaving with training he could not get anywhere else. Overall, he has had hands-on training in engineering, learned how to conserve and manage natural

resources, learned all the aspects of our programs, attained an active knowledge of our computer programs, and acquired cultured knowledge on the best management practice that improves farms. His involvement and the experience that he has gained through working with NRCS will assuredly aid him in any future endeavors he plans to pursue.