

2015/2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Environmental Education





“THE CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM WAS GREAT, OUR PRESENTER KNEW THE ISSUE AND LOTS OF EXAMPLES ABOUT THE TOPIC.”

Valley High School Environmental
Science Teacher



YEAR AT A GLANCE

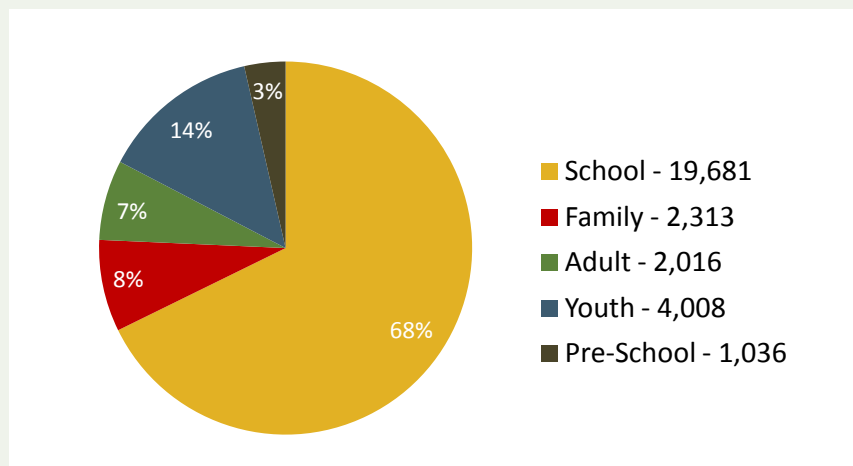
From July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016, the Environmental Education staff connected with various audiences for a total of 35,625 hours.

	PROGRAMS	PARTICIPANTS	CONTACT HOURS
SCHOOL	1,068	19,681	22,337
FAMILY	76	2,313	2,541
ADULT	58	2,016	4,686
YOUTH	189	4,008	5,459
PRESCHOOL	66	1,036	602
TOTALS	1,457	29,054	35,625

Contact hours are the amount of time each individual spends with a naturalist. Example: If a two hour program has 10 participants, the contact hours equal 20.

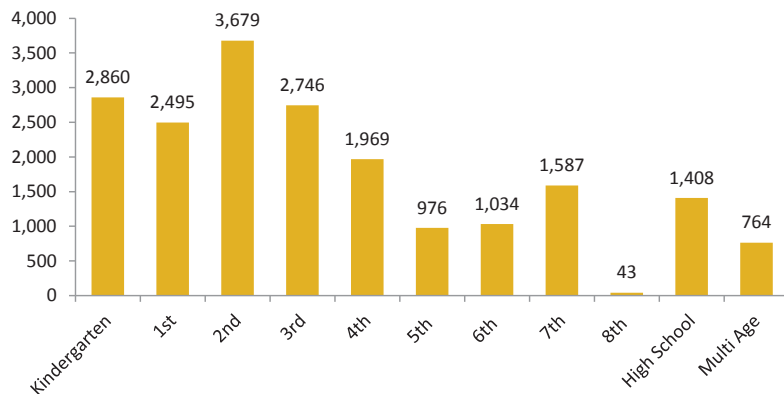
Spending more time with participants can provide a higher impact. The goal is quality verses quantity.

29,054 TOTAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Number of Students by Grade



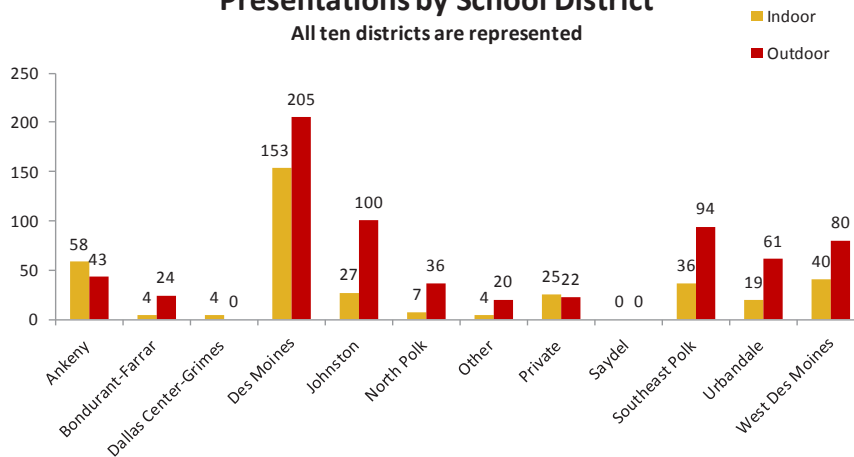
Finding critters in the pond is always exciting

School programs are the major focus of the environmental education unit. We continue to work to align our classroom presentations and field trips with Next Generation Science Standards. Classroom programs and field trips help students meet learning objectives while having fun.

129 FIELD TRIPS, INVOLVING 687

Presentations by School District

All ten districts are represented



* Other includes home school groups and schools outside Polk County

When asked, "Were learning objectives met by this program or field trip?", a 7th grade teacher responded :

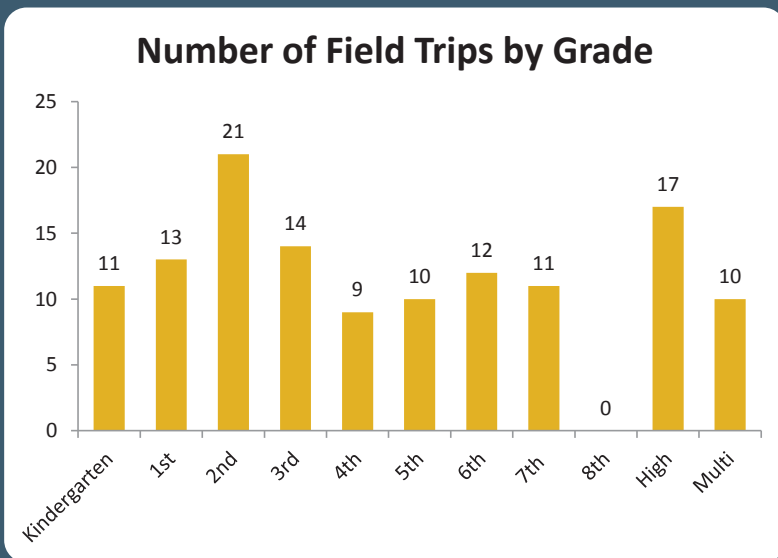
"ABSOLUTELY! WE READ THE BOOK "HATCHET" OUR PRESENTER OF THE DAY RELATED THE LESSON DIRECTLY TO THE BOOK."



Outdoor skill education is a great way to connect students to the outdoors

PROGRAMS & 9,040 STUDENTS

Number of Field Trips by Grade



SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

A total of 129 field trips, involving 687 programs and 9,040 students, were conducted during the 2015-16 school year. With some schools having difficulty with bus funding, the Great Outdoors Foundation provided a limited number of school bus scholarships. During the past year, 9 buses were funded allowing over 550 students to experience nature in Polk County Parks. Limited funds did not allow all of the requests to be funded.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

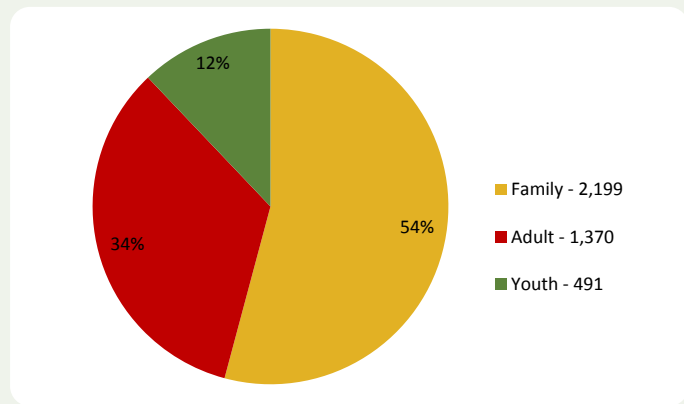
SPECIAL EVENTS

1,448 people attended special events. These events often involve partnerships and have multiple programs taking place at one time. Event partners are in parentheses.

- Iowa Outdoor Expo at Des Moines Izaak Walton League (Iowa DNR and Des Moines Izaak Walton League)
- Walk for Wildlife at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt (Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association)
- Bald Eagle Watch at Jester Park/ Saylorville Lake (Army Corps of Engineers – Saylorville Lake, Iowa DNR and Dallas County Conservation)
- Senior Fishing Derby at Easter Lake Park (Polk County Senior Services)
- Jazz in July at Easter Lake Park (Metro Arts Alliance)
- Fall Frenzy at Walker Johnson Park (Urbandale Parks and Recreation and UCAN)
- Monarch Festival at Blank Park Zoo (Blank Park Zoo and Reiman Gardens)
- Swan Soiree at Walnut Woods State Park (Iowa DNR, Des Moines Water Works and many others)



PUBLIC PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE 4,060



YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Four, week-long summer camps connected youth to the outdoors through hands-on learning activities and adventures
- A day-long survival skills spring break camp taught fire building, archery, and geocaching
- Twenty-four “summer skill” programs helped engage 291, 10-16 year olds in fun physical activities like canoeing, kayaking and geocaching.



FAMILY PROGRAMS

- Presented 11 Nature’s Story Hour and Nature Playdates in various Polk County Conservation parks
- Co-sponsored Nature Friends, a parent/child program, with West Des Moines Park and Recreation
- Thirty youth became “Junior Naturalists” by attending multiple programs and doing independent nature activities
- Programs during spring and winter break were popular with families
- Eight “Discover Your Parks” programs were offered to help introduce families to the parks in their community. Each program averaged 25 people
- Partnered with the Blank Park Zoo to lead monthly Family Nature Club programs

ADULT PROGRAMS

- Continued growth of O.W.L.S. (Older Wiser Livelier Seniors) monthly program, average attendance was 80 people
- Conducted five eco-bus tours, for a total of 209 participants
- Led a paddling adventure trip to the Buffalo River in Arkansas
- Facilitated three “Book Worms” (environmental book club) programs during the winter
- Hosted Music in the Park at the Jester Park Amphitheater on holiday weekends
- Led multiple rain barrel construction workshops and kayaking programs



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an easy and effective way to connect to the public. The data below reflects the ever increasing number of methods and users.

- Twitter followers 450
- Facebook followers 5,830
- Pinterest followers 269
- E-Newsletter subscribers . . . 10,701
- YouTube total views 10,949
- Guide by Cell
 - prompts dialed 3,068
 - new dialers 1,861
 - hours of messages heard . . . 69.5
- Quick Response (QR)
 - code views 152



Environmental Education

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

GRANTS RECEIVED

Received \$36,639 for a Resource Enhancement and Protect/Conservation Education Program (REAP/CEP) grant titled Saving Pollinators One Garden at a Time. This grant enabled PCC staff to work with area religious organizations to install native pollinator gardens at their place of worship. In addition to providing garden designs and native plants, PCC staff educated congregations about native pollinators and encouraged them to plant native pollinator plants at home.



AWARDS

- The Environmental Education and Outreach Team was the recipient of the Polk Soil and Water Conservation District's 2016 Partner of the Year Award. We have worked extensively with Polk SWCD in recent years to educate the public about water quality and conservation.
- 2015 Outstanding Environmental Education Program (3 or more naturalists). Awarded by the Iowa Association of Naturalists and the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition.



OUTREACH

- Orienteering and survival presentations at OJ (Outdoor Journey) for Girls. This program introduces 12-15 year old girls to outdoor skills
- Provided STEM based activities at the Drake STEM night
- Presented 19 programs to eleven local libraries assisting with their reading and spring and winter break programs
- Provided programming opportunities to local civic and professional organizations



STAFF:

- Patrice Petersen-Keys, Environmental Education Coordinator
- Heidi Anderson, Naturalist
- Joe Boyles, Naturalist
- Lori Foresman-Kirpes, Naturalist
- Lewis Major, Naturalist

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Maintained Jester Park bird blind
- Updated 56 Guide by Cell messages and 12 QR codes
- Provided 11 Park Packs for free check out to families and youth groups
- Wrote bi-monthly Ask the Naturalist news columns in the Bull's Eye Newspaper and Polk County Senior Bulletin
- Maintained Jester Park Natural Playscape and Elk/Bison Education Plaza
- Published Nature News three times a year
- Participated in Jester Park Nature Center fundraising and interpretive display planning
- Developed Polk County Geocaching Parks Challenge to encourage people to visit our parks
- Led numerous tours of Jester Park to key community leaders
- Developed interpretive signage for Thomas Mitchell Park Pond Trail
- Participated in bi-monthly water quality monitoring

