

2016/2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Environmental Education





“THE PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY POLK COUNTY CONSERVATION ARE EXCELLENT! THEY ARE WELL ORGANIZED, PROVIDE AN IMMENSE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING, AND ARE FUN! THE NATURALISTS WHO LEAD THESE ARE TOP-NOTCH. WE ARE TRULY BLESSED TO BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR PROGRAMS.”

West Des Moines Home School
Coordinator



YEAR AT A GLANCE

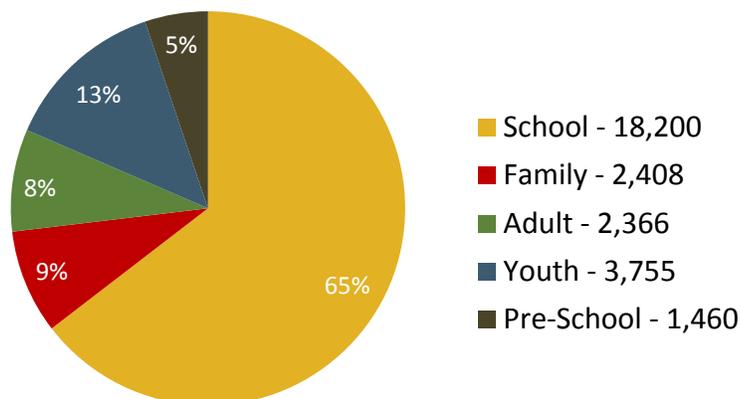
From July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017, the Environmental Education staff connected with various audiences for a total of 34,325 hours.

	PROGRAMS	PARTICIPANTS	CONTACT HOURS
SCHOOL	942	18,200	20,769
FAMILY	70	2,408	2,797
ADULT	61	2,366	5,242
YOUTH	170	3,755	4,853
PRESCHOOL	61	1,460	664
TOTALS	1,304	28,189	34,325

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.

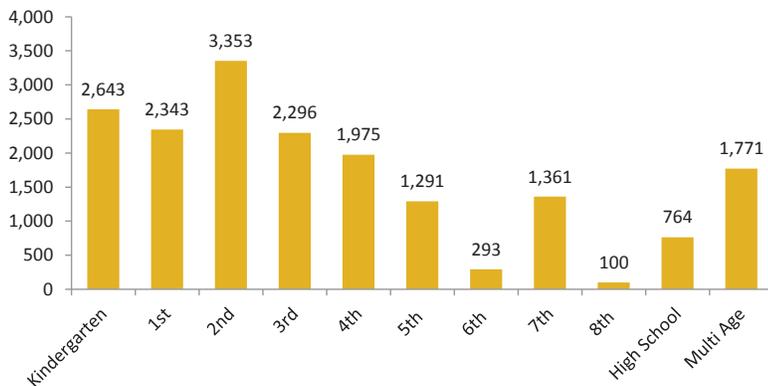
Spending more time with participants can provide a higher impact. The goal is quality verses quantity.

28,189 TOTAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Number of Students by Grade

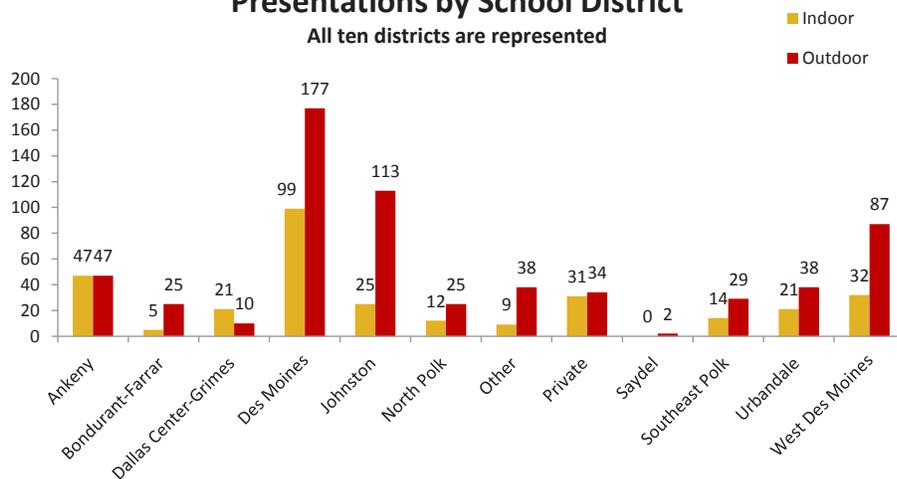


First and second graders enjoy making bird nests.

84% of the teachers responding to our survey replied that Polk County Naturalists exceeded their expectations and nearly 89% stated the presenter's knowledge of the topic was exceptional.

121 FIELD TRIPS, INVOLVING 625

Presentations by School District
All ten districts are represented



* Other includes home school groups and schools outside Polk County

4th grade teacher comments about the Life on the Prairie field trip experience:

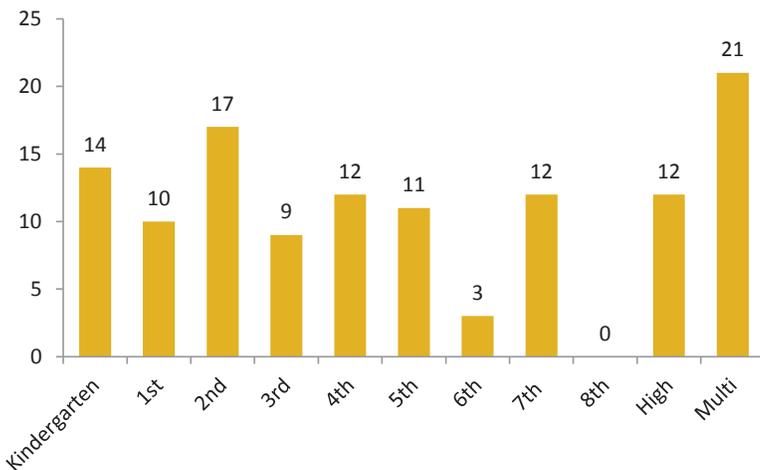
“OVER EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES. THAT’S WHY WE GO BACK EVERY YEAR.



The Life on the Prairie Field Trip has evolved over the past 20 years to be more hands-on and STEM based. Over 625 students from ten schools and four school districts took part in 2016. The Army Corps of Engineers, Salyorville Lake is a partner in this annual event.

PROGRAMS & 7,962 STUDENTS

Number of Field Trips by Grade



SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS

Water Quality was the most popular field trip theme (7th grade and high school), followed by Habitats (3rd and 4th grade) and Insects (Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade). These themes and corresponding programs align with Next Generation Science Standards.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

SPECIAL EVENTS

5,698 people attended special events. These events often involve partnerships and have multiple programs taking place at one time. Event partners are in parentheses.

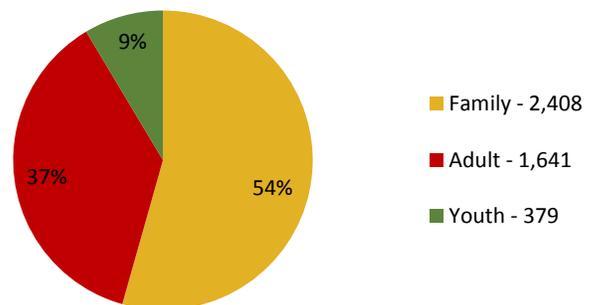
- Iowa Outdoor Expo at Des Moines Izaak Walton League (Iowa DNR and Des Moines Izaak Walton League)
- Walk for Wildlife at Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt (Greater Des Moines Volkssport Association)
- Bald Eagle Watch at Jester Park/ Saylorville Lake (Army Corps of Engineers – Saylorville Lake, Iowa DNR and Dallas County Conservation)
- Three STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) Festivals (Governor’s STEM Advisory Council)
- 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)
- Downtown Earth Day Event at Des Moines Botanical Garden. Many conservation organizations participated with hands-on educational activities.
- Glow Wild at Jester Park (Great Outdoors Foundation)



◀ Catch-n-Croakers takes place in May each year at Chichaqua

PUBLIC PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE 4,428

Public Program Attendance



YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Four, week-long summer day 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. This camp was featured on Iowa Public Television "Iowa Outdoors" program
- Fourteen "summer skills" programs helped engage 190, 10-16 year olds in fun physical activities like canoeing, kayaking and geocaching
- Provided nature adventures and indoor programming for daycares, summer schools and youth groups



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
- Twenty-four youth became "Junior Naturalists" by attending multiple programs and doing independent nature activities
- Programs during spring and winter break were popular with families
- Presented 15 programs to eleven local libraries, assisting with their summer reading programs and spring and winter activities
- 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 95 people
- Conducted seven eco-bus tours, for a total of 313 participants
- Led a paddling adventure trip on the Niobrara River in Nebraska
- Facilitated three "Book Worms" (environmental book club) programs during the winter
- Presented multiple programs to senior centers and assisted living facilities
- Began offering wellness programs, including Japanese Forest Bathing
- Presented to professional associations and businesses



Participants having fun during the Wisconsin Dells Bus Trip

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 513
- Facebook followers 6,099
- Pinterest followers 275
- E-Newsletter subscribers . . . 11,794
- YouTube total views 28,548
- Guide by Cell
 - prompts dialed 3,569
 - new dialers 2,093
 - hours of messages heard . . . 80.5
- Quick Response (QR)
 - code views 122



Environmental
Education

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

JESTER PARK NATURE CENTER

- Raised two-million dollars as part of the capital campaign
- Streamscape fabrication
- Interior signage design
- Operations planning
- Interpretive display planning and design
- Led tours of Jester Park to key community leaders
- Outdoor Recreation and Wellness Center space design, program planning and equipment rental
- Program planning and staffing needs
- Led donor wall recognition project and plaque design



AWARDS

The Pollinator Education and Garden Project received the 2016 Ada Hayden Conservation Education Award. This award commends outstanding efforts to educate about preservation, land management, or natural resource conservation. This project worked with ten religious organizations to install native pollinator gardens while educating congregations about pollinators. Awarded by the Iowa Association of Naturalists and the Iowa Conservation Education Coalition.



OUTREACH

- Orienteering and survival presentations at Outdoor Journey for Girls. This program introduces 12-15 year old girls to outdoor skills
- Coordinated with local outdoor retailers to promote our parks, programs, and resources
- Promoted parks and programs to business leaders with the Greater Des Moines Partnership
- Interviews with MC22 about Indoor Kayaking classes and Rain Barrels



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
- Managed the Polk County Geocaching Parks Challenge
- Participated in bi-monthly water quality monitoring
- Helped maintain the elk and bison herd
- Provide programming and garden management as part of the REAP/CEP Pollinator grant
- Elected to the Central Iowa Tourism Region Board
- Served on the Polk County Conservation Art Committee

