

Bohumil Shimek Environmental Educator Award- Bev Wagner of Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency has been working hard as the Waste Agency’s Education Coordinator since 2004. Bev works hard to connect students and the public to the role of a landfill and practices that the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency employs so that the landfill is clean and renewable. Bev is known for her landfill tours where she showcases the landfills purpose, process, and management. Some things to highlight are the ponds located at the landfill that have a high enough water quality to sustain a population of fish and the landfills methane gas collection system. Once COVID-19 made in person educational tours unsafe Bev worked with area schools to include a virtual landfill tour into their curriculum. Bev also has worked hard engaging with area schools by creating “green teams” and starting recycling and composting programs with local schools.



Chris Holt Youth Environmental Education Award- Polk County Conservation’s Youth Corps has been connecting young people with the natural world since 2017. Nominated by Jenna Coulter Polk County Conservation’s Youth Corps truly deserves recognition for providing teenagers ages 15-18 with an immersive and team-based experience. This Youth Corps focuses on service learning projects from Monday through Thursday and dedicate Fridays to environmental education and recreation. Fall crews have a similar breakdown split between afterschool sessions and Saturdays. Polk County Conservation connects diverse youth with outdoor learning and recreation experiences and helps them become valued environmental stewards. The projects that the youth participate in are tremendously valuable to Polk County natural areas as well as to the youth themselves.



“Ding” Darling Environmental Education Award- With in person educational programs became difficult to do in person Shawnell Richter, Lydia Goehring, Christina Roelofs , Megan Wisecup, and Rachel Aliss hit the ground running with a three part virtual Zoom series on Outdoor Cooking. The first class was all about simple campfire recipes that did not require any special equipment. The second was on pie irons/sandwich makers. The third class was Dutch ovens. This video series were well attended with 100 people per session totaling with 300 people. The majority of attendees were from Iowa but there were also people viewing from Nebraska, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Louisiana. With two tablets and a whole lot of knowledge Shawnell Richter, Lydia Goehring, Christina Roelofs , Megan Wisecup, and Rachel Aliss provided a wonderful and valuable educational series that can still be viewed. Here are the links to the recordings:

Basic Campfire Recipes: <https://youtu.be/U7mfE6oMUmC>

Pie Irons/Sandwich Makers: <https://youtu.be/mDrYyFM0BI4>

Dutch Oven Cooking: <https://youtu.be/y3xEfnkfr3U>



(Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR)

Outstanding Environmental Education Program (two or less Naturalists)

The 2020 winner of the Outstanding Environmental Education Program with two or less Naturalists goes to Heidi Reams from Floyd County Conservation. This past year was anything but normal, but Heidi battled through the challenges and was able to present Floyd County residents with plenty of information. Once COVID-19 hit, Heidi went “live” on Facebook every day at 2:00 pm from the Fossil and Prairie Center. Once the schools of Floyd County decided to go virtual, she made videos of the programs she would have presented in person. To make these videos more accessible, she even created a YouTube Channel for Floyd County Conservation. In the summer, Heidi even did “Somewhere in Floyd County” series where she visited all 33 areas managed by Floyd County Conservation. Besides videos Heidi, and the other Floyd County Conservation Staff (four members), created kits for bird houses or feeders for five dollars each. These kits were a huge success with over 300 kits being sold! I’m sure the birds of Floyd County are quite happy now! Since the make and take kits did so well, during the summer of 2020 Heidi created “Park Packs” with brochures, fossil identification sheet, map of the park, scavenger hunts, and other brochures. At peak usage, they went through 100 packs a week.

As school resumed, Heidi received funding through a Theisen’s Grant, the Floyd County Izaak Walton League, and from the Fossil and Prairie Conservation Foundation. With that money, she created “classroom kits,” which were plastic containers for each of the students. Different program topics had different items placed inside each of the kits ranging from rocks to replica eggs. Each item was sanitized between uses. Heidi used these kits while doing ZOOM programs so the kids could still get that “hands-on” portion of a program.

Thank you Heidi for you dedication to environmental education.



Outstanding Environmental Education Program (three or more Naturalists)

The 2020 winner of the Outstanding Environmental Education Program with three or more Naturalists is Scott County Conservation. With a Naturalist/Director (Dave Murcia), two Naturalists (Mike Granger and Becky Baugh), Assistant Seasonal Naturalist (Paige Owings), and Iowa 4H AmeriCorps Environmental Educator Member (Faith Henrichs), Scott County Conservation was able to present quite a few programs, even during COVID-19. They were able to create 63 educational videos and approximately 297 programs for 5383 people. All levels of public and school were represented in those numbers, including college and homeschoolers! Those 297 programs encompassed a wide variety of topics, from forest bathing to natural health and home products, to a program for International Mud Day. Several new partnerships were formed including *The Center of Outdoor Ethics* and *Leave No Trace*, Quad Cities Women’s Outdoor Club, Hagen Homeschoolers, and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy partnership. All of these things during a multi-million dollar renovation of a new education facility with only one Resident Caretaker to maintain all 225 acres and facilities! WOW!

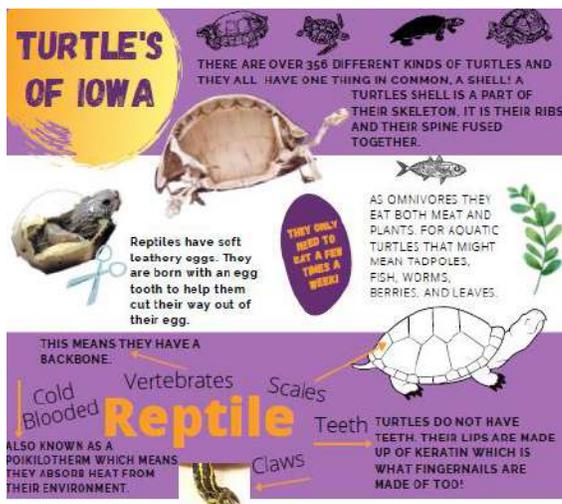
Thank you Scott County Conservation for your continued dedication to environmental education.



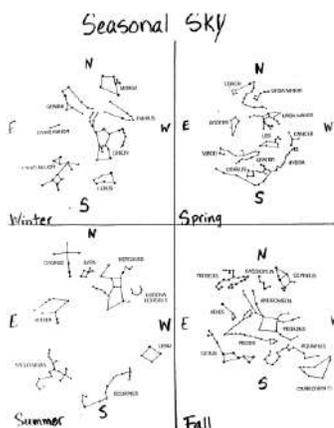
Print Media Award

The 2020 Print Media Award goes to Kristen Bieret from Sac County Conservation. Kristen saw an opportunity to create some Iowa based infographics. She created a series of activities, crafts, and suggested readings all in a little to go bag, free of charge to people. What started as 20 kits soon grew to encompass eight libraries and now disseminates over 130 kits a month! By December 2020, she handed out over 400 of these to go bags! These materials are also available for download on the Sac County Conservation Wix Website. A quote from Library Director Brenda Naberhaus, "In these trying times, we so greatly appreciate all the outside help we are getting, especially from our Naturalist, Kristen! She has been making some grab and go bags for us to send home with our young patrons and they are 'LOVING IT!' Moms and dads have been liking this option, too, because they can do the activities with the children when they have time."

Thank you Kristen for creating some Iowa based infographics! Great way for people to connect to the world right outside their doors.



Outstanding Non-print Media Award- When the pandemic began and schools closed Michelle Wilson (Iowa DNR,) Anne Riordan (Iowa DNR) and Christina Roelofs created the Environmental Education Google Drive so that the students that they work with as well as the public would still have access to environmental education resources. The google drive is separated into two parts. One part focuses on activities and scavenger hunts. The other part is called virtual field trips. This part of the drive has videos, photographs, games, activities/worksheets, and reference materials. Access to this google drive has been given to twenty-four school districts, the Iowa Department of Education, multiple State Park's friends groups, different Facebook pages, as well as different homeschool and individual families.



Outstanding Volunteer Award

The 2020 Outstanding Volunteer Award goes to Olivia Brown. Olivia has been a volunteer for Louisa County Conservation since 2018. Before the pandemic, Olivia would do a wide array of tasks from supervising the county fair booth, cleaning animal cages, to being an actor in their Halloween hikes. As Bobbi Donovan said, “there aren’t many people willing to stand in the cold, rainy weather pretending to be carnivore poop just to help an organization.” Well Olivia did that and made the experience for others a pleasant one as well. One thing Olivia really enjoys is taking care of the 10 animals at Louisa County Conservation. Olivia even walks the turtles outside for enrichment!

Even though Olivia loves taking care of the animals, she pushes herself outside of her comfort zone to help with projects as well. Olivia has autism, but she never lets that stop her from trying new tasks and has grown in confidence during her time with Louisa County Conservation. Thank you Olivia for all your hard work and dedication to Louisa County Conservation.



Sylvan Runkel Award

The 2020 Sylvan Runkel Environmental Education Award goes to Holmes Helps. Holmes Helps is a collaboration between Holmes Junior High in the Cedar Falls School District and Green Iowa AmeriCorps. The project started with Maya Mallavarapu, a former student, that did a service project for the school after noticing the wastefulness of school lunches. Maya’s father, Dr. Ravi Mallavarapu, donated money to help implement a program to curb the waste for the future. Thus, Homes Helps was born. There were some learning curves and bumps, but the program persevered. They now have a bin for composting, plastic recycling, and landfill. In just 14 weeks they diverted over 3000 pounds of food waste from the landfill! Jennifer Trent from the Iowa Waste Reduction Center said Holmes Junior High was the second school in Iowa that was composting and recycling school lunches. Here’s to hoping that other schools will start composting and recycling their school lunches as well. Thanks Holmes Helps for being such trailblazers!



It starts Here. It starts with You.

