

## ***ECOLOGY SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT - SPRING***

One of the quotes that many people live by is “Be the change you want to see in the world.” It was spoken by Mahatma Gandhi quite some time ago, but it still applies today. Although we will be discussing a variety of individual topics during our ecology unit, it is important to remember the big picture; everything is connected and even the littlest of actions can make a big difference. It is especially difficult to realize this during the hectic, craziness that is modern life. As we become more and more connected to each other through that new-fangled interweb and the InstaTwits etc. we are becoming increasingly disconnected with the natural world and our local environment. This project will provide you the opportunity to have a positive impact on the world around you.

You have 7 options available to you:

### **Option 1 – Forest Preserve Work Day**

If you choose this option you will have the opportunity to work with the stewards of the North Branch Restoration Project who have been working to restore local natural areas for over 40 years. They volunteer their time on weekends to remove invasive species, collect seeds, and perform other tasks to manage our forests and hopefully return them to their pre-settlement state. The work day runs on Saturday from 9 AM until 12 PM and will consist of cutting buckthorn and honeysuckle, burning brush piles, and learning about the forest and what is done to manage it. Your parents are more than welcome to attend as well. The more, the merrier! You **MUST** submit your paperwork by the Thursday **BEFORE** the workday.

January Workday - Most likely on 1/18/20

February Workday - TBD

### **Option 2 – Forest Preserve Work Day (on your own)**

If you choose this option, you will still work to restore natural areas as described above, but Mr. J. will not be there. The North Branch Restoration Project hosts workdays every Saturday and Sunday at local preserves.

To see their schedule, click [HERE](#).

You will need to have a steward at the workday complete [THIS](#) form to indicate that you participated.

### **Option 3 – Niles West Work Days**

If you choose this option you will have the opportunity to work with Mr. J. and possibly The N.A.R.W.H.A.L.S. Club to manage our prairie remnant and natural area here at West. You will have to meet **three times** after school from 3:30 PM until 4:30 PM. The work days will consist of spreading seed, pulling garlic mustard, cutting sumac, cutting honeysuckle, planting plants, and/or anything else that might need to be done.

Dates: Every Tuesday afternoon – weather permitting (beginning most likely in April)

### **Option 4 - Volunteering at a Local Organization**

If you choose this option, you can volunteer at any local organization that works to address one of the problems that was discussed during our ecology unit. You can choose from any of the following:

[Feed My Starving Children](#)

[Niles Township Food Pantry](#)

Any other local food pantry or soup kitchen

[Niles Township Clothing Closet](#) - call 847-673-5030 for volunteer information

[Connections for the Homeless](#) - a variety of opportunities can be found on their website

[Expanding Lives](#) - a local organization run by Ms. Natzke which works to educate young women from Niger

You will need to have an adult who supervised your work complete [THIS](#) form to indicate that you participated.

### **Option 5 – Write Letters of Appreciation to Former/Current Teachers**

The first week of May (4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>) is Teacher Appreciation Week and contrary to popular belief, most teachers do not want apples. Honestly, a thoughtful letter of thanks is the greatest reward to any teacher. I have received some throughout the years, I have kept them all, and I occasionally read them when I need inspiration or to remember why I chose to do this for a living. To fulfill this requirement, you should **write 3, one page letters** to any former or current teachers that you would like to recognize. You can write whatever you want in the letter, just DO NOT write that I am making you do it for a grade. Also, you CANNOT write a letter to me because I do not want to solicit your appreciation. Please provide the name of the teacher, if they are here at West, or the name and mailing address on a stamped envelope if they teach at a different school. I will then distribute the letters for you.

### **Option 6 – Volunteer at Reptile Fest 2020**

The Chicago Herpetological (fancy word for amphibians and reptiles) sponsors a show every year at Northeastern Illinois University in which local herp enthusiasts bring their animals together to educate the public about the conservation and care of these often-misunderstood animals. There are a TON of animals on display for people to hold, feed, and interact with. It's like a petting zoo on steroids and YOU can help make it happen! There are many things to do as a volunteer such as taking tickets, stamping hands, helping vendors, helping presenters, holding animals, taking care of animals, etc. You can volunteer even if you don't like herps and have no intention of holding one.

If you are interested in volunteering, complete the form found [HERE](#).

Dates: Saturday, April 18th (10 AM – 5 PM) and Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> (10 AM – 4 PM). You can also help set-up on Friday or take-down on Sunday.

You will need someone in charge of Reptile Fest to complete [THIS](#) form to indicate that you participated.

### **Option 7 – Service of Your Choice**

Since you are all busy people and may not be able to fit my volunteer opportunities into your schedule, I will allow you to choose your own volunteer opportunity. It **must be 3 hours** and you must have the leader/coordinator of the event sign a form for you. The only "rule" is that this service is not something that you would normally do for your family, such as chores etc. It must be something for someone outside of your family or for another organization. Just be sure to print the form prior to beginning your service. That's about it!

You will need someone in charge of your volunteer service to complete [THIS](#) form to indicate that you participated.

### **REFLECTION**

Once you have completed your Service Learning Project for the semester, please complete and submit the Reflection Document found [HERE](#).

