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Green Iowa AmeriCorps: Providing environmental services and initiatives for K-12 school districts throughout the state

Carmen Rae Finken
Green Iowa AmeriCorps
Sustainable Schools
UNI Science Education Update Conference 2019
What is AmeriCorps?

- Domestic version of the Peace Corps
- State and National Programs
- AmeriCorps members serve for a period of time in a National Service position
- Green Iowa AmeriCorps is the largest environmental AmeriCorps program in the state of Iowa
University of Northern Iowa
Center for Energy and Environmental Education

Sustainable Schools
Land & Water
Energy & Community
Energy & Community

Helping make Iowans more energy efficient through
1. Low Impact Weatherizations
2. Energy Education
3. Community Outreach
Land & Water Stewards

1. Create and install more rain gardens/barrels in the Cedar Valley to reduce stormwater volumes
2. Work with organizations in Iowa to plant more trees and native Iowa prairie
3. Commit schools, hospitals, churches, daycares and parks to stop using pesticides on their lawns
4. Build upon existing water quality initiatives throughout the Cedar Valley
Land & Water Stewards AmeriCorps Programs Map
2019-2020

- Lakeside Lab
- UNI Tallgrass Prairie Center
- Practical Farmers of Iowa
- UNI CEEE
- City of CR
- City of Oskaloosa
Sustainable Schools

1. Reduction in district-wide energy costs
2. Assist teachers and staff in implementing environmental project-based learning initiatives
3. Create greater opportunities for low-cost service learning
Sustainable Schools AmeriCorps Programs Map
2019-2020

Dubuque Community and Holy Family Catholic Schools

Waverly-Shell Rock CSD

Cedar Falls CSD

Bondurant-Farrar CSD

Davenport CSD
Sustainable Schools Structure

Full-Time Service Term

Two full-time AmeriCorps members take on two different coordinator roles: Education & Outreach OR Energy Efficiency and serve directly in schools.

Service term lasts 11 months.
Sustainable Schools Structure  
Minimum-Time Service Term

Two high school students can be part of the program as AmeriCorps members for the summer and serve directly in their school.

Service term lasts 3 months.

Juniors Morgan and Madison serving with Green Iowa AmeriCorps
Davis County CSD, summer 2018
AmeriCorps Member Benefits

Full-time

- Living stipend ($13,732 total) distributed in monthly installments by UNI
- Education award of $5,920 upon successful completion
- Federal Loan Deferment
- Interest Accrual Repayment
- Child Care Assistance
- Healthcare Coverage
AmeriCorps Member Benefits
Minimum-time

- Living stipend ($2,469 total) distributed in monthly installments by UNI
- Education award of $1,289 upon successful completion
Examples from our Pilot Year

I. Sustainable Revolution at Davis County Community School District

**Savings Generated:**
- $3,000 by diverting food waste
- $16,000 by diverting recyclable materials
- $5,500 by engaging students in behavior-based energy efforts

**Students interested in becoming more involved in sustainability efforts at DCCSD:**
- 67% of 8th graders
- 65% of 7th graders
- 78% of 6th graders
- 76% of 5th graders
Examples from our Pilot Year

II. Waverly Shell-Rock Community School District

❖ Worked with the Solar Club at the high school to get solar panels installed on campus
❖ Lead a “Walking School Bus” initiative at one of the elementary schools
❖ Assisted with food waste audits at the middle school
❖ Lead over 50 educational activities throughout the course of their service term
Examples from our Pilot Year

III. Holy Family Catholic Schools and Dubuque Community School District

❖ Lead over 150 environmental education lessons
❖ St. Columbkille Elementary honored with Green Ribbon Award from U.S. Department of Education
Examples from our Pilot Year

IV. South Tama County Community School District

- Implemented share tables at elementary, middle and high schools
- Received $17,600 rebate for an LED upgrade from Alliant Energy
- Received $2,800 grant from Iowa DNR to plant 18 deciduous trees on campus
- Lead weekly environmental education lessons at the elementary school
- Decreased 200 pounds of food waste in two months by creating composting tumblers with Industrial Arts and FFA classes
- Implemented paper recycling program
Professional Development Opportunities

MEMBERS ATTENDED:

★ Green Schools Conference (Member presented)
★ Outdoor Learning Environments Conference
★ Iowa Farm to School Conference
★ Midwest Food Recovery Summit (Member presented)

Cameron Mannina, LEED Accredited

Alex Gurnsey, Certified Nonprofit Professional
Hosting AmeriCorps members at your school district

❖ Members can assist with projects that teachers may not have the time/resources to complete

❖ Members can assist with grant writing and applying for rebates

❖ Members are there to SERVE the district and help with environmental project-based learning initiatives
Cost Associated for School Districts

❖ $8,000 cash match for all members (full and minimum time) for the school year

❖ Provide travel reimbursement for members when traveling around campus

❖ Site Supervisor to approve timesheets and meet weekly with members
We’re Hiring!

We’re looking for new AmeriCorps members to serve with us, as well as new school districts that would like to host AmeriCorps members!
Questions?

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