

CONNECTION

The voice of the Earth Team volunteer.

Earth Team—Getting Conservation on the Ground

By Dave White, NRCS Chief

Congratulations, and thank you, to the 2011 National Earth Team Award winners!

When landowners have resource problems, they turn to NRCS and our conservation partners for help.

We at NRCS often turn to Earth Team volunteers for assistance. Volunteers make us a more productive and effective agency, ultimately putting more conservation on the ground. Volunteers increase our organizational effectiveness and efficiency and help create a climate where private lands conservation will continue to succeed. These award winners have performed at the highest level of excellence, and we can look to their programs to model our future volunteer efforts. Thanks again for all of your efforts in helping people help the land.



Dave White

The *Chief's Field Award* and the *National Volunteer Service Award – Chief's Cup* recognize the field office and state that most creatively use volunteers to meet the NRCS mission. **The Longmont Field Office in Colorado** received the *Chief's Field Award* and **Iowa** received the *National Volunteer Service Award – Chief's Cup*.

Recognizing outstanding accomplishments of Earth Team volunteers, the *Individual Volunteer Award* was given to **Robert Mosier of Greensburg, Kansas**, and the **John M. Craddock Wetland Nature Preserve Team from Muncie, Indiana**, received the *Group Volunteer Award*.

Our outstanding partners greatly extend the reach of the Earth Team. **Polk SWCD, Dallas, Oregon**, will receive the *National NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award* and **Five Rivers RC&D, Tecumseh, Nebraska**, will receive the *National RC&D/NRCS Earth Team Award*.

Our NRCS staff help the Earth Team thrive. **Susan Looper, Rupert, Idaho**, is this year's *NRCS Employee Earth Team Award* winner and **Tracey Martin, Salina, Kansas**, is the *Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Award* winner.

We have challenges ahead. The United Nations is projecting a 2.3 billion increase in the world's population by 2050, and they're also estimating that a 70 percent increase in food production is going to be needed to feed all of these people. It's a huge challenge for America's farmers and ranchers—one that we can help them meet while still protecting the environment. The Earth Team helps NRCS do more, extending staff and dollars, in every county across the Nation.

NRCS, landowners, neighbors and the environment appreciate it. So do I.

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Earth Team National 2011 Award Winners

National Volunteer Service Award - Chief's Cup —

National NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award —

National RC&D/NRCS Earth Team Award —

Chief's Earth Team Field Award —

Earth Team Individual Volunteer Award

National/Central Region —

East Region Winner —

West Region Winner —

Earth Team Group Volunteer Award

National/Central Region —

East Region Winner —

West Region Winner —

NRCS EMPLOYEE Earth Team Award

National/West Region —

East Region Winner —

Central Region Winner —

Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator Award

National/Central Region —

East Region Winner —

IOWA

POLK SWCD, Dallas, Ore.

FIVE RIVERS RC&D, Tecumseh, Neb.

LONGMONT FIELD OFFICE, Longmont, Colo.

ROBERT MOSIER – Greensburg, Kan.

BENJAMIN VANDUSEN – Walton, N.Y.

RIXON RAFTER – Salinas, Calif.

JOHN M. CRADDOCK WETLAND NATURE

PRESERVE TEAM, Muncie, Ind.

MADISON COUNTY DRINKING WATER

FESTIVAL – Huntsville, Ala.

NORTHERN ARIZONA ARCHAEOLOGICAL

ETVS – Show Low, Ariz.

SUSAN LOOPER – Rupert, Idaho

KILBY MAJETTE – Quinton, Va.

A. BRENT CLARK – Marshall, Ariz.

TRACEY MARTIN – Salina, Kan.

CHRIS HANCOCK – Cookeville, Tenn.

2009 NATIONAL EARTH TEAM
VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD - CHIEF'S CUP
KANSAS

Pictured: the Chief's Cup

College Student Learns Job Skills by Volunteering

by Kristen Lemoine, Louisiana State Volunteer Coordinator, and John Pitre, NRCS Wildlife Biologist

Earth Team Volunteer Lance Ardoin is a wildlife management major at McNeese State University (MSU) who used a volunteer opportunity with Louisiana NRCS to grow in his future career field and gain valuable field experience. He teamed with NRCS to help conduct a rangeland National Resources Inventory (NRI) in southwest Louisiana.

The NRI program is an assessment of range or marsh conditions that aids in directing conservation efforts by helping better understand the condition and trends of associated natural resources. NRI study locations are randomly selected and technical specialists visit the sites to assess conditions and collect specific vegetative and soil resource data.

Once on a site, Ardoin was able to observe and get instructions on sampling techniques, data collection, plant identification, soils analysis,

production estimation, and resource concerns from a team of technical specialists including soil scientists, range conservationists, a grazing lands conservation specialist, and a wildlife biologist.

Ardoin spent two days with the team volunteering his time in remote sites in 100 degree heat and high humidity conditions with no shade. It was difficult, fast paced work with just enough breaks to stay hydrated. When Ardoin was asked if this hard work had caused him to rethink his career choice, he said, "This experience tells me I made the right career choice."

Ardoin says his Earth Team experience has given him a better understanding of Gulf Coastal marsh ecology and he has gained experiences far beyond what could be gained in the classroom.



Soil Scientist Mike Lindsey (left) shows Earth Team Volunteer Lance Ardoin how to characterize marsh soils.



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The NRCS Earth Team Connection is looking for articles for our next issue.

The deadline for submission is February 14, 2011. Please send your stories, photos and photo captions to: dick.tremain@ia.usda.gov.

Earth Team Volunteers See Third Book Published

by Mary Giles, Public Information & Outreach Coordinator with NRCS South Missouri Water Quality Project

Missouri NRCS recently released a children's booklet written and illustrated by Missouri Earth Team volunteers. *Skeeter's Awesome Adventure* is the third booklet in a series created by Earth Team volunteers to introduce Missouri's young children to the earth's natural resources.

Skeeter's Awesome Adventure highlights the water cycle and promotes the importance of protecting and conserving the water on earth. It was authored by Debbie Hunter in 2007 and illustrated by Alicia Michael in 2009. Both were students at Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) in Springfield, Mo.



Debbie Hunter

Mimi Lor, an Art and Design student at Missouri State University in Springfield, completed the

layout and design of the booklet in 2010. Funding was provided through Missouri NRCS and today *Skeeter's Awesome Adventure* is available to educators in Missouri through NRCS county field offices and the NRCS state office.

The booklet is the result of a partnership effort between the NRCS South Missouri Water Quality Project and the English and Fine Arts Departments at OTC.

Story lines for the first two booklets in the series, *The Little Acorn* and *The Trash in Chigger County*, were also created during the partnership. They introduce concepts related to plant



Mimi Lor



Alicia Michael

growth, soils, the causes and effects of pollution, and erosion.

These booklets were released by Missouri NRCS in 2008 and 2009 respectively.

Mary Giles, Earth Team Coordinator with the South Missouri Water Quality Project, says partnerships and outreach efforts pay big dividends for conservation. She told *Earth Team Connection*, "During the past six years I have worked with OTC students on many partnership projects. These students contributed over 4,000 hours of service as Earth Team volunteers. They extended their classroom learning while acquiring valuable experience providing service within the Upper White River Basin. But possibly just as important as their service was what they took with them at the end of the projects - a better understanding of our agency's mission to protect and conserve natural resources."

Earth Team Volunteer Helps Hillsboro Field Office with Advanced Degree

By Dean Moberg, District Conservationist, Hillsboro, Oregon Service Center
Submitted by Patty Shumway, Oregon State Volunteer Coordinator

Gayatri Yellajosula, an Earth Team Volunteer in the Hillsboro, Ore., Field Office, holds a doctorate from the Department of Environmental Conservation Science at North Dakota State University in Fargo. Her dissertation topic was "Evaluation of Soil Carbon Sequestration in the Semi-arid Regions of the Northern Great Plains."



Gayatri Yellajosula

Yellajosula was born in Visahapatnam, India, and studied environmental sciences there. She is now helping the Hillsboro Field Office staff by producing maps for

highly erodible land (HEL) and wetland determinations. Because Hillsboro has a new Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding pool that focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Yellajosula has agreed to work with a local partnership to develop a simple tool for the field office to estimate reductions in greenhouse gases as farmers implement their EQIP practices. Yellajosula has experience with CarbOn Management Evaluation Tool - Voluntary Reporting (COMET VR), Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation, Version 2 (RUSLE2) and CENTURY, which are all models that help predict greenhouse gas emissions and/or carbon sequestration.

Currently, Yellajosula is also looking for full-time work that fits

her strong background in soils and environmental sciences.

Gayatri Yellajosula is not a U.S. citizen. Patty Shumway, Oregon State Volunteer Coordinator, said we had her complete NRCS-PER-002, the Volunteer Interest and Placement Summary Form, and it was submitted to the International Programs Division. After a time Gayatri was approved to be an Earth Team volunteer.

General Manual 360-428-Part 428.21 covers this subject in detail.

Earth Team Makes RC&D Food Distribution Possible

Photo and story by John Kellis, Ohio Valley RC&D Coordinator, and submitted by Missy Sanders, Ohio State Volunteer Coordinator

The Ohio Valley RC&D (OVRC&D) Council initiated a community outreach program in 2008 that resulted in a partnership with the Christian Appalachian Project (CAP) located in Corbin, Ky., which feeds the hungry. This partnership increased the staff workload which required the RC&D council to recruit Earth Team volunteers to help distribute donated food, drink, and other supplies to the needy.

Now officials say the program, which assists 22,000 southern Ohio families, would be impossible to carry out without help from Earth Team volunteers.

The OVRC&D program, called Ohio Valley Shares, is an alliance with the larger, multi-state CAP which distributes donated products throughout Appalachia. The larger CAP works through regional distributors including Ohio Valley RC&D to offer corporate donated

products to needy individuals and organizations.

The Ohio Valley RC&D Council finds warehouse space, organizes area community groups, and receives,



Earth Team volunteers Stanley Skinner (left) and Steve Bradds load boxes for the Ohio Valley Shares program which distributes food to the poor and hungry.

inventories, and distributes the donated goods. It distributes one truckload of goods each month to food banks, church assistance programs, homeless shelters, domestic violence and crime victim programs and other community organizations.

Earth Team volunteers help distribute donated items.

Roughly 150 area organizations are included in the Ohio Valley Shares program. The value of goods distributed through participating partners the past two years is nearly \$2 million. "It is gratifying to be able to help in some fashion," says RC&D Coordinator John Kellis. "I never really anticipated being able to offer this kind of help through my work with NRCS, but that is the essence of RC&D, seeing need and finding ways to help. I am thrilled at the notion of our Earth Team volunteers stepping up to make this all happen."



Earth Team Volunteer Hunter Duncan, in the red shirt, and USDA field office staff are nearly hidden by donations they helped collect for the Feds, Farmers and Friends Feed Families (F5) program in Madisonville, Tenn. Duncan, a 14 year old high school student, helped spearhead local F5 collections in the summer of 2010. The Earth Team volunteer is joined by (from the left) Gail Saffles, Barbara Raper, and Lois Garren.

Teenage Volunteer Spearheads Local F5 Collections

by Natalie Freeman, Tennessee Area Volunteer Coordinator

Hunter Duncan is a 14 year old Earth Team volunteer in the Madisonville, Tenn., USDA Field Office. He began doing field and clerical work the summer of 2010, but ended taking on the Feds, Farmers, Friends Feed Families (F5) program to collect food for needy families as his "big summer project."

Duncan went to work. He and former AmeriCorps worker Corey Rolen went to businesses in Monroe County with information about the program. The local newspaper did an article on F5 and Duncan convinced his church youth group to help with the project. Duncan and his church went to work and collected over 1,000 lbs. of food, baby diapers, toilet paper and soap. The donated F5 food and supplies were given to the Douglas-Cherokee Neighbor Service Center for distribution to needy Monroe County families.

Staff says Duncan spent the summer finding ways to help feed hungry families in Monroe County. They credit him for his hard work and determination and for helping spearhead their local F5 effort as an Earth Team volunteer.



Kansas NRCS Recognizes Employees Who Started Their Careers as Earth Team Volunteers

Submitted by Jan Klaus, Kansas State Volunteer Coordinator

Editor's note: Kansas NRCS recently took time to recognize current employees whose careers were launched through volunteering with Earth Team.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Earth Team (ET) Volunteer program, and Kansas NRCS looks back at some of the program's accomplishments. The inception of the ET volunteer program on April 25, 1985 was a result of expanding NRCS's services by using volunteer time, talent, and energy to facilitate the NRCS mission - Helping People Help the Land.

"NRCS in Kansas is proud of the many dedicated ET volunteers who have committed their time and talents in conserving and protecting the soil, water, and wildlife in their communities across Kansas over the past 25 years," said Kansas State Conservationist, Eric Banks.

Since 1985, approximately 16,518 private citizens in Kansas have donated over 479,262 volunteer hours.

The ET volunteer program offers an opportunity for individuals to obtain a sense of accomplishment by contributing their time and talent to help protect the natural resources in their communities. Many others are volunteering to gain hands-on experience with the agency in hopes of achieving future aspirations of being hired on as a fellow NRCS employee. The agency prides itself in taking the time to expose and train volunteers on the wide variety of fields pertaining to conservation of our natural resources.

On these three pages are several Kansas NRCS employees who learned about the agency by volunteering.



Rita Schartz

Rita Schartz, district conservationist, St. John Field Office, Kansas, was an Earth Team volunteer in Watkinsville, Ga., from 1998 to 1999. Both NRCS and the Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D) were working toward protecting wetlands and developing a wetland educational site. Schartz helped compile a database of wetland plants and commercial sources where the plants could be purchased.

Schartz said her volunteer experience helped her by providing her insight into the wide variety of environmental projects NRCS and RC&Ds worked on.

Her first paid NRCS position was as a soil conservationist at the Iola, Kan., field office where she educated employees on carbon sequestration.



Jamie Holopirek

Jamie Holopirek, district conservationist, Greensburg Field Office, Kan., first started as an Earth Team volunteer at the La Crosse, Kan., Field Office in 2001. He assisted the soil conservationist with surveying and note taking.

As a volunteer, he gained experience in the total station set-up and used this skill to survey an ag-waste facility.

His first paid position was as an NRCS soil conservationist at the Concordia Field Office where he received technical training in the field from two experienced technicians.

Holopirek is grateful for his Earth Team experience. He says it drew him to NRCS and a career in conservation work.

Earth Team's 25th Anniversary Highlighted on Kansas Television

Statewide Kansas Public Television honored NRCS' 75th Anniversary and the 25th anniversary of Earth Team in a program which aired October 14, 2010. The Kansas video, part of the long running "Sunflower Journeys" series, examined conservation work performed by Kansas NRCS employees and Earth Team volunteers.

Interviews with State Conservationists Eric B. Banks and Kansas State Volunteer Coordinator Jan Klaus were featured.



Jeremiah Schutz sets up a laser level.

Jeremiah Schutz, soil conservation technician, South Hutchinson Field Office, Kan., started in Nebraska in 2004 volunteering at the Omaha Field Office on his days off from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. He created planning maps, digitized watershed boundaries for the NRCS civil engineer, and completed farm and tract reconstitutions. His work is credited for increasing efficiency of the field office operations and conservation planning. He provided NRCS employees assistance in applying conservation on the land and he says his volunteer experience gave him a better understanding of NRCS projects and programs.

A highlight he enjoyed was creating design maps where he would overlay engineering designs on digital orthophotography in ArcView to reference the locations of dam sites for landowners.

He was hired as a While Actually Employed (WAE) which turned into a two-year temporary position as soil conservation technician working in Lancaster and Cass County, Nebraska. As a WAE, he worked with the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Team in Syracuse, Nebraska, to update and create all the WRP toolkit folders for the entire state.



Mike Clover (right) demonstrates how to use a survey rod to an Earth Team volunteer

Michael Clover, district conservationist, Kingman, Kan., served as an Earth Team volunteer in Medford, Okla., in 1999 and 2000. He assisted the soil conservation technician with layout and check out of conservation practices primarily in the summers. His volunteer experience provided him with hands-on training of how conservation practices fit into different situations.

He was eventually hired by NRCS in Woodward, Okla., as a soil conservationist.

Clover demonstrates his support for the Earth Team program by continuing to provide training to new volunteers and recognizing the importance of their contributions.

The primary purpose of the Earth Team program is to expand NRCS services by using volunteer time, talent, and energy to help accomplish the NRCS mission. However, many volunteers have found their

true calling as an NRCS employee while donating their time to conserve and protect our natural resources.

Jan Klaus, Kansas State Earth Team Coordinator



Justin Kneisel in his days as an NRCS Earth Team volunteer

District Conservationist Justin Kneisel, El Dorado, Kan., first started as an Earth Team volunteer in the Hiawatha, Kan., Field Office from 1991 to 1994. As a volunteer he helped survey, make maps, file and assemble folders, and input data into the computer. As a volunteer, Kneisel said he became acquainted with the agency's mission and some of the staff during his tour. He felt this relationship and exposure to the agency provided him with a successful background to be selected for the student trainee program leading him toward his career as a soil conservationist and later a district conservationist. He said he was able to see conservation planning in action, and later go back and observe the positive effects on the resources.

Kneisel says one of his favorite things to do now is drive by farm fields he worked on 19 years ago and still see the functioning practice he helped to install still protecting the land.



Jody Gienger (right) explains the effects of erosion using the rainfall simulator.

Jody Gienger, soil scientist, Central Great Plains Soil Survey Region (MO5) Salina, Kan., volunteered at the St. Francis Field Office from 2000 to 2002. She helped by organizing conservation folders, filing, assembling a range plant identification booklet, flagging a pit pond with the technician, and assisting soil scientists and the geologist when they were out in the field. She also attended an irrigation-scheduling workshop and rangeland field days.

She said her volunteer experience provided her insight into the many different disciplines of the agency and, it was during this time, she learned that soil scientists get to do a variety of work and to spend more time outdoors.

Her first job was as a soil scientist student trainee in Hays Area Office.



Nick Strawn poses as a size reference in a large washout in Nebraska.

Nicholas Strawn, soil conservation technician, Manhattan, Kan., was an Earth Team volunteer for the Edwards County Nebraska Field office in 2002 and 2003. He was trained to map in Arcview, write conservation plans, stake, survey, and checkout terrace and waterway designs.

Nick said that one of the greatest advantages of the Earth Team program was it allowed him to get his foot in the door to work for NRCS. He added he saw the benefits of terraces and waterways implementation and wanted to be a part of these conservation efforts.

Earth Team Volunteers Fix a ‘Grave’ Problem

by Carol Weymouth, Somerset County SWCD, and Elaine Tremble, Maine State Volunteer Coordinator



Maine Earth Team volunteers and staff restore an on-farm graveyard which is part of a dairy farm’s cultural resources plan. The graveyard had to be restored in order to allow NRCS staff to address the Maine farmer’s nutrient management concerns. (From the left back row) NRCS Soil Conservationist Darol

Wilson, NRCS Soil Conservationist Peter Abello and (far right) NRCS Archaeologist Dr. Gary Shaffer. (Front row from the left) Earth Team Volunteers Ashley York, Stephanie Oliver, Chris Linscot, Science Teacher Paul Thompson, Morgan Burrill and Ashley Burrill.

It was a “grave” problem. NRCS Soil Conservationist Peter Abello was working with a Ripley, Maine, dairy farmer to address his nutrient management issues. Included in the process, as part of the required National Historic Preservation Act, was a survey of the area by NRCS Archaeologist Gary Shaffer. Through this process Shaffer found an old, on-farm burial site.

Shaffer worked with local NRCS staff and the landowner to identify conservation priorities and practices that would benefit not only the burial site, but the project as a whole. He mapped the site using a metric grid system, recorded artifacts found and developed a restoration plan. With the assistance of a ground penetrating radar device, he identified sixteen graves even though

all were not clearly marked. Some of the graves had carved marble and granite tombstones while others were identified with fieldstones. Shaffer said the tombstones needed to be stabilized before winter and more research must be done in order to properly repair the old tombstones.

Caren Roy, NRCS financial technician and Earth Team volunteer, helped Shaffer. She studied the genealogy of the deceased and said, “It was very interesting to learn the history of the farm and the people who have lived there.”

The graveyard needed to be restored to its former condition. Students from Carrabec High School signed up as Earth Team volunteers to help. In addition to raking and

shoveling loam, picking rocks, and stabilizing tombstones, students learned how their current studies are relevant outside the classroom. “Algebra, geometry, and historical research are all utilized in restoration processes like these,” Shaffer told the volunteers.

The students also learned about agricultural conservation practices such as erosion control, soil stabilization, and nutrient management from local soil conservationists.

The landowner was happy with the results and student Earth Team Volunteer Morgan Burrill said, “I’m so glad I came here today and helped with this project. It’s really interesting, and great to help restore this graveyard.”

Earth Team Volunteers Honor NRCS Founder

Submitted by *Dastina Johnson, Delaware State Volunteer Coordinator*



Robert Snieckus (left), NRCS national landscape architect, Andree Duvarney (center), special assistant to the chief, and Brian Symmes (right), property co-owner, plant a progeny of one of the original oaks at “Eight Oaks” the former home of Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett the first chief of the NRCS/SCS. Snieckus and Duvarney were part of a group of Earth Team volunteers from headquarters who took leave to help restore the grounds of Dr. Bennett’s former home in McLean, Virginia. The conservation work took place October 15 to help celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. *USDA Photo by Bob Nichols.*

Wisconsin Volunteer Displays Many Many Talents

by *Deb Potts, Wisconsin State Volunteer Coordinator*



Earth Team Volunteer Savanna Dahl (right) guides a Prairie Chicken mascot at the annual Central Wisconsin Prairie Chicken Festival sponsored by the Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council of Stevens Point. Dahl volunteered 310 hours to the council last year on a variety of projects which include removing invasive plants, counting beetles and milfoil bundling for a Eurasian Milfoil pilot study. She is also credited with helping write grants, conduct informational mailings and keeping at least one prairie chicken safe.

Earth Team Volunteers’ Work Feature on Newspaper’s Front Page

Submitted by *Charlotte Elliott-Friend, West Virginia State Volunteer Coordinator*

The front page of the August 7th edition of The Dominion Post of Morgantown, W.Va., featured pictures and a story of Earth Team volunteers tending a butterfly garden at the USDA office in Sabraton. Reporter Kaylyn Christopher told her readers USDA employees started the garden to beautify their new building and participate in the People’s Garden program.

West Virginia State Volunteer Coordinator Charlotte Elliott-Friend and Earth Team Volunteer Carol Lagodich were highlighted. In a copyright article they describe how

a butterfly garden was chosen to fit the small available space near their office and how a number of NRCS employees were involved in the design, planting and maintenance of the garden. Lagodich was quoted explaining the critical importance of pollinators to food production and offering encouragement to others to start similar projects in their own backyards.

The Earth Team volunteers’ message of urban conservation seems to have made an impression on the newspaper. Besides running the butterfly garden story on its front

page, the newspaper is offering backyard conservation tips to readers on its website.

See the story online at: <http://ee.dominionpost.com/Repository/ml.asp?Ref=RFBvc3QyMjAxMC8wOC8wNyNBcjAwMTAz&Mode=Gif&Locale=english-skin> or simply Google “Morgantown NRCS butterfly garden.”

Volunteer Doesn't Let Physical Challenges Stop Her

Submitted by Ann Cotton, District Secretary, Chadron NRCS Field Office, Nebraska

After retiring from nursing in 1980 due to a back injury, Carolyn Schaeffer looked forward to traveling and relaxing. Unfortunately, life took an unexpected turn when she suffered a torn retina in her right eye. Two surgeries later, she still had permanent vision loss in the center of her eye. When macular degeneration threatened vision in her left eye seven years ago, Carolyn learned to compensate for vision loss by using her peripheral vision.



Carolyn Schaeffer

Carolyn moved to Chadron, Neb., in the summer of 2003. Carolyn joined Chadron's Retired Senior Volunteers Program (RSVP) shortly after moving to Chadron, and

answers their phones 10 to 12 hours per week. She has also served as an RSVP board member for the past two years.

Through RSVP, Carolyn became an NRCS Earth Team Volunteer at the Chadron Field Office in August 2009. There, she answers phones, takes messages, and greets walk-in customers while personnel are away at meetings and training sessions.

Schaeffer says she has to get out of the house. "Volunteering gives me insight into what is happening in the community," she said.

District Conservationist Robin Foulk is pleased Carolyn has joined the Earth Team. "We really appreciate our volunteers' efforts in the office and in the field. The volunteers who serve as the receptionist while we're away at meetings allow us to keep the office open to serve our customers, many of whom only stop by to drop off

bills or touch base with us while they're running other errands in town. They appreciate being able to talk to a 'live' person, rather than to our answering machine."

As long as she feels comfortable, regardless of her impairment, Carolyn has a place to volunteer at NRCS Chadron Field Office.

Do you want to know more about RSVP and get these special volunteers in your office? Ann Cotton recommends contacting your local RSVP office when additional Earth Team volunteers are needed. Ann said, "Our local RSVP office maintains a list of approximately 350 senior volunteers, age 55 to late 80s, available to work at community non-profit organizations and agencies."

To contact your nearby RSVP office, simply Google RSVP and the name of your town or state.

Indiana Area Earth Team Coordinator Retiring

Submitted by Robert Miller, Indiana State Volunteer Coordinator

Indiana RC&D Secretary and Office Assistant Michelle Phillips will be retiring after 17 years of service as an NRCS employee and 13 years as an area Earth Team coordinator.



Michelle Phillips

The Greencastle resident says she will enjoy quilting and helping with Earth Team after retirement. "I believe in the philosophy of volunteering, and I think the Earth Team is a great way to help NRCS get the job done. I hope it's here to stay, long after I'm gone," said Phillips.

Volunteer "Digs" Earth Team

Submitted by Vera Thomas, NRCS Centers Volunteer Coordinator

Leesa Spencer digs being an Earth Team volunteer-literally. She volunteers with NRCS archaeologists from the National Water Management Center in Little Rock, Ark., doing field work and proof reading and editing reports and environmental assessments for center staff.

Keith Admire, center director, recently honored Spencer during their employee appreciation day held in November. He cited her dedicated service to the Earth Team program and listed many of Spencer's volunteer accomplishments which included assisting with outside archaeological testing under adverse weather

conditions. Archaeological testing includes operating artifact recovery sifting screens, writing field notes and inventory. He said her efforts freed archaeologists to do additional field work and were instrumental in the center meeting a critical deadline.



Leesa Spencer

Admire said, "I appreciate all of the assistance Leesa offered this year and I look forward to her assistance for fiscal year 2011."

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