GVSU Community: Groundswell

Paige Leland
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/colleagues/vol12/iss1/19

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colleagues by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
History of Groundswell

Groundswell, formed in 2009 out of Grand Valley State University’s College of Education, was established with the vision to provide schools with the fiscal assistance to implement environmental service learning for students that coincide with grade level curriculum. The organization provides K-12 teachers with support for place-based education and academic service learning in the field of environmental education. In the past, schools affiliated with Groundswell have completed projects such as raising salmon to release into the wild (East Kentwood High School), building trails in the woods as well as studying the effects of hydroponic farming on common garden vegetables (All Saint’s Academy).

The MDEQ Grant/LGREI

Recently, Groundswell was awarded a three-year grant through the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The MDEQ grant, otherwise known as the Lower Grand River Education Initiative (LGREI), has increased the ability of Groundswell to support local teachers by providing additional financial resources, technical expertise and more opportunities to engage with partners within the community. Because of the grant, Groundswell will interact with 15 schools, 60 teachers, and 1,200 students within Kent County.

The LGREI program focuses on water quality in the Lower Grand River Watershed with an emphasis on nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution (NPS) includes urban stormwater and agricultural runoff that occurs when rainfall and snowmelt flowing across the ground pick up chemicals and other contaminants and ultimately carry them to the river. The LGREI grant is designed to increase education as well as awareness about NPS and efforts that can curb it. The schools that are involved with LGREI will receive Groundswell support that will allow teachers to participate in professional development activities, students to be educated about the issue of water quality, community members to be aware about nonpoint source pollution, community partners to be engaged with experts in the field, and will also allow schools implement service learning initiatives that reduce nonpoint source pollution impacts.

Benefits of LGREI include:

• Financial support up to $1,500 for implementing a project that addresses NPS pollution
• Opportunities to strengthen community engagement
• Student exposure to practitioners in science/environmental fields
• Training for students in video/radio production through a partnership with WGVU
• Opportunities to learn more robust monitoring and data analysis applications with support from the Annis Water Resources Institute
Groundswell Partners

Grand Valley Metro Council  Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber Inc.
Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative  Cranbrook Institute of Science
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  Kent Conservation District
The Wege Foundation  Aquinas College
Grand Valley State University  Annis Water Resource Institute
Ada Township  The City of Wyoming
Calvin College  Schupan Recycling
Kent ISD  John Ball Zoo
Kent County  WGVU
CocaCola Recycling  Howard Christensen Nature Center
Celebration Cinemas  Land Conservancy of West Michigan
Wittenbach/Wege Center  NOAA
Frey Foundation  Blandford Nature Center
United Way of West Michigan  WMEAC

LGREI Projects in Action

Because Groundswell is working with 15 schools as a part of this grant, students throughout the Grand Rapids area are engaging in a variety of diverse environmental projects. Students in Rockford, MI are painting storm pipes to raise awareness about the runoff. Other students at Union High School are building rain gardens in an effort to utilize the stormwater and reduce runoff. Groundswell also partners with WGVU, a radio station affiliated with Grand Valley State University, and they will be broadcasting with students involved in LGREI projects.