Special Recognition for ElkhartWood

In the last issue of the newsletter, we shared with you a new and exciting program at the EEC called ElkhartWood. ElkhartWood is a great example of finding value in reusing and repurposing sawlogs to sustainably support community tree plantings and education in our community. This exciting new program is generating a buzz not just here in Elkhart, but across the state!

In January, Ericka Popovich from the EEC and Dan Coy, Elkhart City Forester, received special recognition for this program at the Indiana Arborist Association (IAA) state conference. Elkhart was selected as the recipient of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Gold Leaf Beautification Award. Each year the ISA selects one recipient for the award from each of its chapter organizations and this year it was Elkhart for the ElkhartWood program. To learn more about this award and see a list of past recipients in our state, visit the IAA website at https://ag.purdue.edu/fnr/associations/IAA/Pages/goldleaf.aspx.

ElkhartWood includes urban wood utilization, community tree plantings, education and training, and Arbor Day. You can find more information about the program on the EEC website at www.elkhartindiana.org/eec or stop by the center! The program is supported by local sawyers and woodworkers. If you would like to connect to this fantastic local natural resource, please contact the EEC at (574) 293-5070.
The Elkhart Environmental Center hosts and participates in a number of community events and there are some very important ways that volunteers can get involved!

**Event Planning**

Arbor Day and EnviroFest are the EEC’s annual community events and planning for both starts early. If you enjoy planning events or have a skill you’d like to share, please contact Ericka as soon as possible to learn more about joining an event committee, what you can do, and the time commitment involved.

Arbor Day is scheduled for April 25 and EnviroFest is July 10

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**Event Volunteer**

You can also get involved with Arbor Day and EnviroFest by signing up to help out on the day of the event. Volunteers help with a variety of tasks including set up, assisting guests, event activities and clean up. Sign up information will be available 4-6 weeks before each scheduled event.

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**Community Events - EEC on the road**

Volunteers are needed to help the EEC participate in community events. Events occur throughout the year, often on weekends or evenings. Volunteers set up the EEC booth, share information about the center, distribute brochures, and typically lead short hands-on activities with families. Opportunities will be posted quarterly in the EEC Volunteer Newsletter. Contact the EEC to find out about event opportunities as soon as they become available.

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**Professional Development Opportunities**

**Free Online Courses on Environmental Topics**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is hosting several Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) this year on topics related to conservation, sustainability, and the environment. For information about upcoming courses and to register go to [http://moocs.wisc.edu/](http://moocs.wisc.edu/).

**Indiana Natural Resources Teacher Institute**

**June 22–26, 2015**

Classroom teachers will learn to teach STEM concepts and principles from a natural resource perspective and develop a STEM-based curriculum project. Participants will receive more than 30 Professional Growth Points. Indiana classroom teachers only. If you are interested, send an email to drogler@dnr.IN.gov.

**Great Lakes Literacy – Environmental Education Association of Indiana (EEAI)**

**September 25-27, Dunes Learning Center, Chesterton Indiana**

Come learn techniques and best practices for teaching to develop Great Lakes Literate citizens. Presentations will focus on understanding ecology, fostering stewardship, and environmental justice issues all within the ecologically diverse and awe-inspiring landscapes of NW Indiana. It’s time to do the Dunes with EEAI! [http://eeai.org/2015Conference](http://eeai.org/2015Conference)

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**Become an Event Volunteer**

The Elkhart Environmental Center hosts and participates in a number of community events and there are some very important ways that volunteers can get involved!
Is your company, organization or club interested in volunteering as a group and giving back to the community? Call the EEC to set up a project at (574) 293-5070 or send an email to ericka.popovich@coei.org.

**Specialized Skills**

The EEC is seeking the following specialized skills. Please contact Ericka at (574) 293-5070 to find out how you can help!

- Communications/graphic design
- Landscaping/horticulture
- Event planning/management
- Edible/small space gardening

**Invasive Species Removal (year-round)**

Volunteers are needed to eradicate invasive plants competing with native vegetation. Training provided.

**Adopt-a-Trail (year-round)**

Nature lovers are needed to help care for trails at Boot Lake Nature Preserve and the EEC. Volunteers keep trails clear of trash and debris. Plenty of trails still available!

**Trail Improvement (year-round)**

Help maintain the hiking trails at the EEC. Spread wood chips, trim overgrowth and ensure trails are in good condition. Equipment and training provided.

**Education, Outreach, & Events**

**Arbor Day Planning**

January – April 2015

If you are passionate about trees than this is the event for you! If you are interested in helping plan Arbor Day 2015, please contact the EEC.

**EnviroFest Planning Committee**

January – July 2015

If you enjoy event planning and are interested in promoting environmental stewardship, join the EnviroFest Planning Committee. We need motivated individuals to help with fundraising, activity planning, exhibitor recruitment, and more.

**Public Program Presenter**

Do you have knowledge or skills you can share with others? We are always looking for program presenters who can lead public programs at the EEC. Program areas that meet the EEC’s mission include the environment, sustainability, stewardship activities and behaviors. For more information, call the EEC!

**Gardens & Trails**

**Seed Starting & Planting (March - April)**

The EEC will start vegetable seeds for the food education garden in early March. Help us get the seeds garden and prepare the raised bed for plants!

**Volunteer Farmer (March – November)**

Will work for...fresh veggies? Then help with the food education garden! Volunteers plant seeds, weed, water and harvest. There are spring, summer, and fall harvests. No farm/garden experience necessary and you can take home some of the harvest to enjoy!

**Garden Projects (March through November)**

Spend time weeding, and enhancing gardens at the environmental center. There are several gardens to choose from and we have everything you need to get started!

**Group Volunteer Opportunities**

Is your company, organization or club interested in volunteering as a group and giving back to the community? Call the EEC to set up a project at (574) 293-5070 or send an email to ericka.popovich@coei.org.
Snow Fun at the EEC

The temperature may have dropped, but the fun hasn’t stopped at the EEC! The trails are still open for use so bring your snowshoes, cross country skis, boots and snow suits and come explore all of the winter fun before it melts away!

Getting Warmed Up

The EEC is ready to brave the cold this winter. In an effort to improve energy efficiency, the visitor cabin is getting much-needed insulation in the crawlspace and the attic. This will help the cabin retain heat during the winter and protect the water pipes from freezing so the geothermal heating can keep us safe from the cold while being gentler on the environment.

Staff Changes at the EEC

In December Tim Cataldo resigned from his position as the Environmental Center Supervisor. Tim had been with the center since 2010. His passion for the environment was obvious to all of who met him. He is looking forward to devoting time to incorporating permaculture design elements into the land around his home. We wish him the best of luck!

Ericka Popovich started as the new Environmental Center Supervisor in January. The Environmental Program Coordinator position is currently vacant, but will be filled as soon as possible. Stay tuned to the next volunteer newsletter for more updates on this staff change at the EEC.

EEC Mission and Vision

The mission and vision for the Elkhart Environmental Center was presented to the community in summer 2013. Though it is still a work in progress this new mission is a critical step in identifying the EEC’s place and value in our community.

Vision

We envision the City of Elkhart as a model for a resilient world with all citizens participating in a broader environmental consciousness.

Mission

We impact the quality of life for Elkhart residents, groups, organizations, and businesses. As a leader in our community, we model and support intentional life choices that lead to durable community.

Does our mission resonate with you? Call or visit the EEC to find out how you can get involved in helping us realize our goals within the community. Together we truly can grow a better tomorrow in Elkhart!