

NEWS FROM THE CREW

CONSERVATION CREW FALL 2023

FROM THE TRAILHEAD

This year, we have ten new schools joining Conservation Crew, for a total of thirty-five Crews around the state! We're excited to continue to cultivate our relationships with educators and encourage them to nurture their students' creativity.

Over the summer, our team compiled evaluation results from the 2022–23 school year. Students were asked a set of questions early in the school year and again at the end. During that time, the number of students who answered with the highest rating for “it is important to take care of the environment” jumped by 22%. Scores also increased for “It is easy to take steps to protect the environment” and “I can make a difference in my community.”

CREW VIEWS

Lake Middle School, one of last year's Conservation Celebration winners, continues to inspire us with their dedication to positive change. They have set their sights on enhancing accessibility for all by adding wheelchair-accessible paths to the school forest, which they began revitalizing last year. Their vision embodies inclusivity and environmental stewardship. We look forward to seeing how they create a welcoming space for everyone to enjoy the beauty of nature while fostering a stronger sense of community.

These students are learning the ongoing commitment that habitat rehabilitation requires. Lake Middle School's project is an example of how Conservation Crew can be used to tackle large-scale projects that can't be completed in a single calendar year.

CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Last school year, all but one Crew school enlisted help from outside experts. We were thrilled to hear that students continued to learn from experts beyond their school walls over the summer break.

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Prairie Winds Middle School visited the Science Museum where they were offered hands-on experiences that stretched their understanding of the natural world. Meanwhile, **Westwood Middle School** students worked hand in hand with local experts to improve their native planting project at a local library, ensuring the vibrant native plants flourished all summer. These stories underscore the significance of engaging with experts beyond the classroom, enriching our students' education while benefiting the broader community.

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

With dedication and a passion for conservation, Erica Bentley, one of **Hiawatha Academies'** Co-Crew Leaders, has left an indelible mark on her students and the environment. Her commitment to nurturing the next generation of environmental stewards led to tremendous success at Hiawatha Academies. Now, she is embarking on a new chapter by introducing a Conservation Crew at **Hmong College Prep Academy**. We anticipate the positive impact her leadership—along with another teacher at Hmong College Prep Academy—will have on the students and the environment at her new school.

CONSERVATION CREW

CONSERVATION MINNESOTA