

# 2020 IAN-ICEC Awards for Excellence in Environmental Education

**Bohumil Shimek Environmental Educator Award** *for outstanding efforts by an environmental educator*

**Bev Wagner - Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency**

Bev Wagner has been working hard as the Waste Agency's Education Coordinator since 2004. Bev works hard to connect students and the public to the role of a landfill and practices that the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid



Waste Agency employs so that the landfill is clean and renewable. Bev is known for her landfill tours where she showcases the landfills purpose, process, and management. Tour highlights are the ponds located at the landfill that have a high enough water quality to sustain a population of fish and the landfill's methane gas collection system. Once COVID-19 made in person educational tours unsafe, Bev worked with area schools to include a virtual landfill tour into their curriculum. Bev also has worked hard engaging with area schools by creating "green teams" and starting recycling and composting programs with local schools.

**Chris Holt Youth Environmental Education Award** *for an outstanding environmental education program for youth or conducted by youth (preschool-grade 12)*

**Polk County Conservation Youth Corps**

Polk County Conservation's Youth Corps has been connecting young people with the natural world since 2017. The nominator said that Polk County Conservation's Youth Corps truly deserves recognition for providing teenagers ages 15-18 with an immersive and team-based experience. This Youth Corps focuses on service-learning projects from Monday through Thursday and dedicates Fridays to environmental education and recreation. Fall crews have a similar breakdown split between afterschool sessions and Saturdays. Polk County Conservation connects diverse youth with outdoor learning and recreation experiences and helps them become valued environmental stewards. The projects that the youth participate in are tremendously valuable to Polk County natural areas as well as to the youth themselves.



*“Ding” Darling Environmental Education Award for outstanding environmental education program or event which informs and educates the general public*

**Shawnell Richter, Lydia Goehring, Christina Roelofs, Megan Wisecup, Rachel Aliss**

When in-person educational programs became difficult, Shawnell Richter, Lydia Goehring, Christina Roelofs, Megan Wisecup, and Rachel Aliss hit the ground running with a three-part virtual Zoom series on Outdoor Cooking. The first class was all about simple campfire recipes that did not require any special equipment. The second class focused on pie irons/sandwich makers. Dutch Oven cooking was featured for the third class. This video series was well attended with 100 people per session totaling 300 people. The majority of attendees were from Iowa but viewers also came from Nebraska, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Louisiana. With two tablets and a whole lot of knowledge Shawnell, Lydia, Christina, Megan, and Rachel provided a wonderful and valuable educational series that can still be viewed. Check out the recordings:



- [Basic Campfire Recipes](#)
- [Pie Irons/Sandwich Makers](#)
- [Dutch Oven Cooking](#)

*Sylvan Runkel Award for outstanding whole-school environmental education program*

**Holmes Junior High School - Holmes Helps**

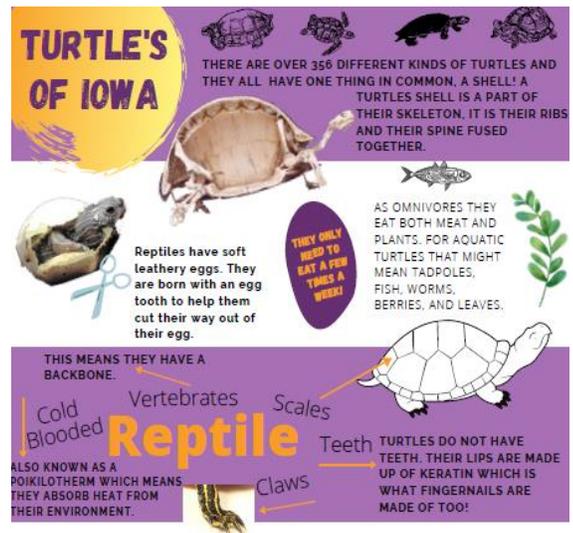
Holmes Helps is a collaboration between Holmes Junior High in the Cedar Falls School District and Green Iowa AmeriCorps. The project started with Maya Mallavarapu, a former student, that did a service project for the school after noticing the waste left from school lunches. Maya’s father, Dr. Ravi Mallavarapu, donated money to help implement a program to curb the waste for the future. Homes Helps was born. There were some learning curves and bumps, but the program persevered. The school now has bins for composting, plastic recycling, and landfill. In just 14 weeks they diverted over 3,000 pounds of food waste from the landfill. Jennifer Trent from the Iowa Waste Reduction Center said Holmes Junior High was the second school in Iowa that was composting and recycling school lunches.



## Outstanding Interpretive Print Media Award

### Kristen Bieret - Sac County Conservation

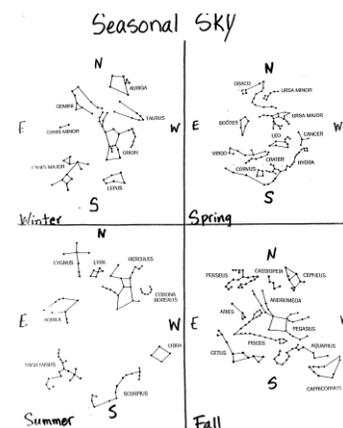
Kristen saw an opportunity to create locally inspired infographics. Starting with these infographs, Kristen created a series of activity booklets with activities, crafts, and suggested readings. These booklets were printed and distributed in their signature brown paper bags with items to make the featured craft. Then, Kristen partnered with eight libraries and now delivers over 130 kits monthly. Kristen has seven different booklets created so far and will have handed out over 400 by the beginning of December. These materials are also available for download on the Sac County Conservation website.



## Outstanding Non-print Media Award

### Michelle Wilson, Anne Riordan, Christina Roelofs

When the pandemic began and schools closed Michelle Wilson (Iowa DNR,) Anne Riordan (Iowa DNR) and Christina Roelofs created the Environmental Education Google Drive so the students they work with, as well as the public, would still have access to environmental education resources. The Google Drive is separated into two parts. One part focuses on activities and scavenger hunts. The other part is called virtual field trips and has videos, photographs, games, activities/worksheets, and reference materials. Access to this Google Drive has been given to twenty-four school districts, the Iowa Department of Education, multiple State Park's friends groups, different Facebook pages, as well as homeschool groups and individual families.



## Outstanding Volunteer Award

### Olivia Brown, Louisa County Conservation



Olivia has been a volunteer for Louisa County Conservation since 2018. Before the pandemic, Olivia would do a wide array of tasks from supervising the county fair booth, cleaning animal cages, to being an actor in their Halloween hikes. As Bobbi Donovan said, “There aren’t many people willing to stand in the cold, rainy weather pretending to be carnivore poop just to help an organization.” Well Olivia did that and made the experience for others a pleasant one as well. Olivia really enjoys taking care of the 10 animals at Louisa County Conservation. Olivia even walks the turtles outside for enrichment!

Even though Olivia loves taking care of the animals, she pushes herself outside of her comfort zone to help with projects as well. Olivia has autism, but she never lets that stop her from trying new tasks and has grown in confidence during her time with Louisa County Conservation.

## Outstanding Environmental Education Program (three or more Naturalists) *for excellence in environmental education programming by an agency or institution*

### Scott County Conservation

With a Naturalist/Director (Dave Murcia), two Naturalists (Mike Granger and Becky Baugh), Assistant Seasonal Naturalist (Paige Owings), and Iowa 4-H AmeriCorps Environmental Educator Member (Faith Henrichs), Scott County Conservation was able to present quite a few programs, even during COVID-19. Staff were able to create 63 educational videos and approximately 297 programs for 5,383 people. All levels of public and school ages were represented in those numbers, including college and homeschool students. Those 297 programs encompassed a wide variety of topics, from forest bathing to natural health and home products, to a program for International Mud Day. Several new partnerships were formed including *The Center of Outdoor Ethics* and *Leave No Trace*, Quad Cities Women’s Outdoor Club, Hagen Homeschoolers, and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy partnership. This programming happened during a multi-million-dollar renovation of a new education facility with only one Resident Caretaker to maintain all 225 acres and facilities.



**Outstanding Environmental Education Program (two or less Naturalists) *for excellence in environmental education programming by an agency or institution***

**Floyd County Conservation**

This past year was anything but normal, but naturalist Heidi Reams battled through the challenges and was able to present Floyd County residents with plenty of information. Once COVID-19 hit, Heidi went “live” on Facebook every day at 2:00 p.m. from the Fossil and Prairie Center. Once Floyd County schools went virtual, she made videos of the programs she would have presented to students in person. To make these videos more accessible, she shared the videos on the Floyd County Conservation YouTube Channel. In the summer, Heidi even did a “Somewhere in Floyd County” series where she visited all 33 areas managed by Floyd County Conservation. Besides videos Heidi, and the other Floyd County Conservation Staff (four members), created kits for bird houses or feeders for five dollars each. These kits were a huge success with over 300 kits being sold! I’m sure the birds of Floyd County are quite happy now! Since the make and take kits did so well, during the summer of 2020 Heidi created “Park Packs” with brochures, fossil identification sheet, map of the park, and scavenger hunts. At peak usage, they went through 100 packs a week.

As school resumed, Heidi received funding through a Theisen’s Grant, the Floyd County Izaak Walton League, and from the Fossil and Prairie Conservation Foundation to create “classroom kits,” which were plastic

containers for each of the students. Different program topics had different items placed inside each of the kits ranging from rocks to replica eggs. Each item was sanitized between uses. Heidi used these kits while doing virtual programs so the kids could still get that “hands-on” portion of a program.

