

**Project title and Project number:** PFI Youth Program: Conservation, Food and Farming: 07-17

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**Project's purpose and targeted audience:** Provide quality agricultural and environmental programs for Iowa's urban and rural youth through outdoor, hands-on, experiential learning at our camps and retreats.

**Reflect on your project, providing a self-assessment. At a minimum, answer the following questions: Did your project go as planned? Explain what went well and why. Explain what you would do differently if you did the project again, and why.**

I felt our programming went very well this year because even though our numbers were not as high as we had aimed for the quality of learning and diverse community building that took place fully made up for it. One goal was to improve our attendance and we did double it from the previous year. Prior to the camp I was discouraged that all our extensive marketing efforts had not brought in 40 campers. But after the camp I felt confident that this was a great building year where quality relationships were formed that will draw children back for years to come. Most of the children at camp were new this year, as was the entire staff, which made it especially important to have space to build relationships. My previous experience in working with children has taught me that quality investments in few children often provide greater returns than trying to reach a large quantity of children at one time.

That said I felt that the programming developed for the camp was received very well by the children, and I hope to be able to reach many more children with the curriculum in educational settings. In preparing for the camp I did not find any curriculum that addressed these issues of where our food comes from, what is in processed foods that we get from the store, and how it affects our farmers, so I created a curriculum with interactive games that tied these things together. The feedback received from the children after camp indicated that they enjoyed the educational games and learned memorable things from them. This was encouraging and led me to seek further funding to perpetuate them in the schools by teaching them to other environmental educators.

So, in summation, things went better than anticipated, because there is potential to reach even more children than we had originally set out to, while the children that came to camp received a better quality experience than they might have received with 40 campers because this was a building, transition year in both staff and campers. Our future goals are definitely to grow the number of attendees at our camp each year, but in re-evaluating I am confident that slow growth will build a stronger program in the end than going from 10 to 40 young campers in one year.

**Please list the most relevant outputs,<sup>1</sup> and explain, if necessary.**

- 26 campers in attendance at our Summer Camp, including adult campers and Youth Leadership Program counselors (an additional registered but could not attend)
- Marketing campaign consisting of:
  - 1) 1,792 brochures mailed from the print house, including our membership, Iowa Farmers Union's membership and County Conservation Boards across the state
  - 2) 4,134 brochures or flyers delivered to area schools to be sent home with students
  - 3) 331 brochures mailed per request to educators around the state
  - 4) 4 local high schools posted and promoted our information
  - 5) 2 camp scholarships awarded at the State Science and Technology Fair
  - 6) Volunteered at the regional and state Envirothon to promote the Youth Program
  - 7) Offered scholarships to children at the Des Moines Boys and Girls Club

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<sup>1</sup> Measurements of production, such as number in attendance at a workshop.

- 4 different nationalities represented among campers, as well as a diverse mix of economic status, and a half and half split between city and farm kids
- 13 local farms, bakeries, or dairies supported that supplied food for our events
- 8 outside educators or musicians provided meaningful programming for the camp and retreat
- 22 people attended the Fall Retreat, including 9 children, mostly summer campers
- 8 partnerships with other organizations provided support for our programming through sponsorships, publicity, and training
- 280 media outlets received press releases about the camp
- 3 radio services covered the camp state-wide: Radio Iowa, Radio News Service, and Hwy 6 –Your Road to the Country radio show

**Please list the outcomes,<sup>2</sup> and explain, if necessary. Be sure to include the outcomes outlined in your grant proposal.**

Our outcomes for 2007 were that all camp participants could:

1. Identify how food production affects the environment, in both positive and negative ways;
2. Report a stronger commitment to Iowa and its environment, because of their experiences at our camps;
3. Say they had “fun”—which is key to engaging them in our quest for a sustainable future.

The following is the survey we used to evaluate these outcomes. I called each camper one to two months after camp to get their individual feedback. These were their responses:

**What were 3 things you liked about camp?** (note: we didn’t say “favorite” to let creativity flow more)

Games: soccer, frisbee—11

Playing in the creek—9

Hiking—5

Meeting new friends—5

Swimming—5

How far food travels/where our food comes from game—3

Astronomy/science performer—3

Performing heart surgery on an eggplant (Food Art)—3

Watercolor painting—3

How much farmers get paid game—2

Going to the farm—2

Making ice cream—2

The local food: ice cream, chicken, bacon, strawberries—2

Canoeing—2

Campfire—2

Learning about your backyard grocery store

Sleeping in bunk beds

Night hike

Planting the plants we got to bring home

Songs

**What’s one thing you want to be sure to do next year?**

Play in the creek—3

Climbing wall—3

Archery—3

Hiking

Play the fun games we played

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<sup>2</sup> What important things happen as a result of the project, such as a documented change in behavior or new concepts learned.

Bird watching

**What did you learn about where your food comes from?**

- The store game—how much money the farmer gets, some products they don't get much money
- Farmers
- The cards game about where food came from where we guessed what was in it. I was surprised both about what was in it and where it came from.
- I planted the tomato plant and seeds we got.
- More of a factory farmer gets paid less. There are a lot of producers in Iowa.
- On a farm or garden. I planted my watermelon seeds.
- I ate one of my tomatoes last night.
- All over!
- Support local food growers—food's just better that way. My tomatoes did pretty good.
- Farmers that grow them and animals too.
- Plants that first appeared, then humans started planting seeds.
- Plants. I ate my yellow tomatoes.
- From your backyard.
- A lot of our food has soybeans mixed in and is processed so much.
- Most of the wheat, corn and soybeans can come from Iowa. We get stuff from a lot of different places. Not much money goes to the farmer
- Wheat comes from Iowa, I mean corn, and some wheat

(NOTE: we had bread made from wheat grown in Iowa and many kids didn't know that wheat grew in Iowa.)

**What is your "Backyard Grocery Store"?**

- You can plant stuff and you don't have to pay for it. I planted my seeds from camp.
- That we can get a lot from Iowa and the garden
- Food from Iowa. I planted my seeds, but the cat ate the leaves.
- Locally grown—finding an in the state farmer.
- No pesticides, fresh.
- Where you should get your food.
- Food you can grow and eat in a meal and feel good about it. You can be proud to know where it came from—not some huge factory.
- Extra fun work, caring for plants and nature.
- Great! Like my garden.
- To grow plants for food.
- Healthier than you get at the grocery store. The farmer got more money when the food wasn't processed so much.
- Some flowers you can eat, and you can eat some stems and roots, and we have a lot in our backyard.

Based on these responses we can assuredly say that the children had fun and feel a stronger commitment to Iowa. They learned some valuable things about how food production affects the environment, and even farmers, mostly in the sense of learning what is ideal for the farmers and eaters, i.e. local. Next year we plan to focus more specifically on how food production affects the environment with a theme around land use.

**Were there any negative outputs or outcomes, and/or concerns about the accuracy of your evaluation data, which you did not list above? If so, please identify the most relevant ones and explain.**

None

**Identify your one to three most effective marketing tools (i.e., conferences, e-mails, flyers, news releases in local papers), describe your use of them, and why they were effective.**

Surprisingly, one of the most effective marketing tools for us was distributing flyers about our camp in area schools. We copied and delivered over 4,000 flyers to local schools, and found that doing so really diversified our audience. All of the families that responded through the school flyers were enthused and thankful for the scholarships provided that enabled their kids to go to camp. The idea was recommended by a mother of a camper who has a history of coming to PFI's Summer Camp. Even though we only pulled in a handful of campers through the school flyers this year, I believe it provided visibility that will be building.

We also got a lot of press coverage from the media once we sent out press releases. A couple of the radio shows, papers, and magazines contacted us for interviews after we blanketed the press releases. I think there was a lot of interest because the nature of the camp was unique. No one had heard about a camp about local food and farmers before, so it sparked a lot of interest. I don't know how much the press coverage helped our attendance this year, because it was primarily around the time of the camp, but the visibility will surely help our program in the future.

So, both the school flyers and press coverage were effective in the sense that they provided visibility that will help build our Youth Program long term, which is at least as important as a short-term boost.