

VOLUNTEERS

Helping People Help the Land

From the Volunteer's Perspective...

I experience a sense of passion and pride towards something greater than myself every time I volunteer with an organization that directly benefits others, such as serving with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as an Earth Team Volunteer.

I have been with NRCS since 2008 – volunteering nearly 100 hours over my summer breaks and a few hours a week while in school – assisting the public affairs specialist for NRCS in Minnesota. Through my familiarity with social media, I help by developing messaging for Twitter, promoting upcoming media events, as well as other clerical tasks like designing PowerPoint slides for presentations for employee meetings.

Although these tasks may seem insignificant, even the simplest tasks can contribute to the overall goal of conservation. Even though I wasn't working directly with people on farms and seeing the gratitude on their faces, volunteering has provided me with invaluable skills.

As a child, I grew up with my family constantly discussing agricultural issues and solutions, which for the most part seemed a little over my head. However, I have learned that as a volunteer with NRCS, I am respected and appreciated for my service, regardless of my agricultural knowledge. This organization allows its volunteers to get hands-on experience in a variety of career fields – from human resources to soil conservationist.

Volunteering is a great way to give back to the environment and community. It's an experience that changed my life not only environmentally, but of how much I can serve my community.

It gave me the confidence to explore other realms of community services, such as Summer Stretch or Students Today Leaders Forever, which gave me experience working directly with youth. Additionally, this assurance



Raquel MacSwain - Photo by Julie MacSwain, NRCS, MN.

also carried over into my involvement with various organizations at Ripon College, such as Alpha Chi Omega or Black Student Union, which both in broad terms emphasize standing up for something bigger.

Being an NRCS Earth Team volunteer led me to where I am today – an AmeriCorps member working with the Boys and Girls Club at the Verona High School.

The Earth Team is the volunteer component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



If you are interested in volunteering, contact the National Earth Team office at (888) 526- 3227 or visit

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/people/volunteers/>