

Education Grants

Alert

The Weekly Report on Funding Opportunities for K-12 Programs

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 29

March 6, 2010

Youth lead the way to rural community revitalization

Born from the idea that kids can be taught to do extraordinary things, Growing Rural is a youth-led rural development initiative from the Center for Rural Outreach and Public Services. Participants in the program write grants, plan events, design projects, engage in research, make public presentations, and even produce training manuals to teach other youth how to emulate their practices — all for the sake of community revitalization.

“The idea is to empower them to serve small towns so that they will come back when they grow up,” said Beverly Santicola, executive director, CROPS. “If this process doesn’t happen, rural areas will die out.”

Incorporating youth in your development efforts not only helps instill a sense of community, but it may also boost your town’s revitalization efforts and expand opportunities for youth. For example, San Pierre, an Indiana town that never before applied for grants, has now received more than \$300,000 in grants, said Santicola.

The Growing Rural program, which consists of a six-step problem-solving method, is aligned with farming terms, Santicola said.

The method is as follows:

Field Analysis — Youth development and community needs assessment. This includes identifying youth to participate in the project. Places to find participants include churches, sports groups, and 4-H clubs. “We even found a group of skateboarders,” said Santicola. The best avenue that CROPS found for implementing the program was as an afterschool-based initiative. To identify the community’s needs, the organization sent out community surveys and held town meetings.

Soil Preparation — Leadership development of youth volunteers and adult members. This process will depend on the community, Santicola said. The first year of the Growing Rural program in San Pierre, CROPS met with the youth participants

monthly and held a three-week training. During year two, meetings were held less often and training went down to two weeks. In the third year, meetings were held quarterly with an intensive one-week training.

Seed Planting — Service learning activities that align with STEM education, entrepreneurship, and vocational skill building. The Growing Rural program also partners with at-risk groups from inner cities. Inner city students work alongside the town’s youth on development projects and stay at a camp one week during the year. “It goes beyond service learning; we teach kids from the inner city to work with students in rural areas to revitalize small towns,” said Santicola.

Plant Nourishment — Cultural enrichment with integration of new media technologies. As part of the Growing Rural program, participants produce books and DVDs to train other youth how to replicate their success. In addition, they learn how to conduct oral history interviews so that stories of the past could be told in digital format.

Crop Harvesting — Student learning outcomes and community development outcomes. “It’s a slow process, be patient,” Santicola said. “Rural development doesn’t happen overnight. If you go into the town, we still have rundown buildings. The changes are small, but they are happening.”

Land Enrichment — Program evaluation and continuous improvement.

CROPS started the Growing Rural program in 2005 in San Pierre, with funding from the Ball Brothers Foundation. The organization hopes to expand the initiative to nine other counties in Indiana’s 2nd District, and has recently requested additional funding through a state FY 2011 appropriation.

For more information, visit www.ruralgrants.org ■



360 Hiatt Drive, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418
Phone: 561-622-6520 Fax: 561-622-0757
www.lrp.com

Extension: 8713 E-mail: lcianciolo@lrp.com

March 22, 2012

Beverly Santicola
Executive Director
Center for Rural Outreach & Public Services Inc
2929 Buffalo Speedway #213
Houston, TX 77098
santicola@sbcglobal.net

Dear Beverly Santicola:

As per your request on March 14, 2012, LRP Publications has granted you permission to reprint and post the following article to your website: *Education Grants Alert*®, volume 6, issue 29, 2010:

"Youth lead way to rural community revitalization"

As a condition for granting this request, we require that you prominently display the following copyright statement:

Source: *Education Grants Alert*®. Copyright 2012 by LRP Publications, P.O. Box 24668, West Palm Beach, FL 33416-4668. All rights reserved. For more information on this or other products published by LRP Publications, please call 1-800-341-7874 or visit our website at www.shoplrp.com/special_ed.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or additional requests at 561-622-6520 ext. 8713.

Kind Regards,

Lauren Cianciolo
Marketing Department
LRP Publications