

Residents, educators encouraged to apply for grant for youth

by Jessi Dreckman
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A grant program that provides funding for educational programs based on sustainable agriculture is currently accepting proposals, and one local resident is urging Ozark County educators to consider applying. The North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has issued a call for proposals for a youth educator grant, and proposals will be accepted until the grant's Nov. 10 deadline. With a relatively easy, straightforward proposal and up to \$2,000 in funding, Sycamore-resident Amelia LaMair says she hopes Ozark Countians will apply.

LaMair wrote a grant proposal that was funded during last year's program, allowing a group of Lutie School students to visit the Alford Forest this spring and learn about sustainable forestry.

"The SARE Youth Educator Grant is a great opportunity to broaden young people's exposure to sustainable agriculture, and I would love to see more grants funded in our area," LaMair said in a recent interview with the *Times*. "The funds can be used for all kinds of projects - building school gardens, hiring speakers, showing films related to agriculture, organizing field trips - there's a lot of opportunity there."

LaMair said she wants to emphasize that those applying shouldn't be intimidated by the thought of putting together a grant proposal for this program.

"The staff is really easy to work with, and the application is straightforward. So you don't have to be an expert grant writer to figure it out. I'd be happy to help anyone who is interested in applying for one of these grants," LaMair said.

She added that SARE also offers grants to farmers who want to research sustainable agriculture methods for their own farms.

Alford Forest field trip

LaMair's successfully funded proposal allowed 11 students from Lutie High School to visit the Alford Forest, a 4,300-acre forest filled with pine, hickory and oak trees along Bryant Creek near Brixey, last April.

"The objective of the trip was to make the students aware of the economic, environmental and social benefits of managing our local forests in a sustainable way and to foster appreciation for nature in general," LaMair said. "Even though we live in a rural area, most of us spend way too much time indoors or on devices. I wanted to get these students out in the woods and help them appreciate the beautiful landscape they live in."

The field trip started with an introduction from Alford Forest's long-time manager David Haenke, who explained the history, mission and management philosophy of the forest. The students then went to the sawmill where Alford Forest employ-

ee Eric Tumminia sawed boards from a post oak tree with the swing-blade sawmill on the property. Students learned how to stack the freshly sawed lumber for curing and then helped count the rings of a tree to determine its age.

"Even though the tree wasn't all that big around, the rings indicated that it was over 100 years old," LaMair said.

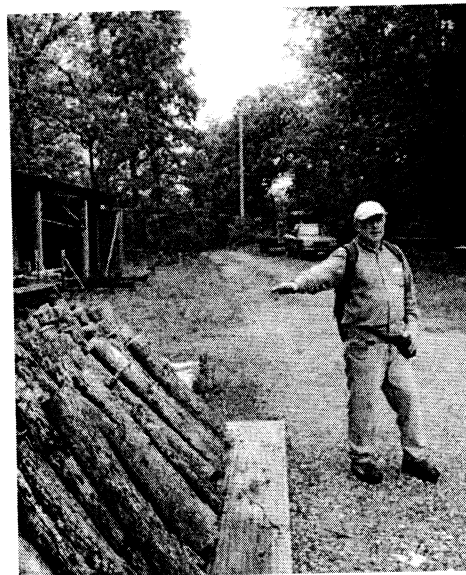
Alford Forest secretary Michelle Gurley took the students on a tour of her project, a shiitake mushroom operation, showing the students how to inoculate white oak logs with mushroom spawn, explaining that soaking the logs beforehand encourages them to produce. The variety of shiitake spawn allow the mushrooms to produce at different times throughout the year. Haenke then introduced the students to the idea of using waste-wood scraps to create biochar, explaining that it can be used to improve garden soil, combat climate change by storing carbon and even as fuel in different ways.

Next the group headed into the forest, stopping to examine a site that had been selectively logged several years ago. Haenke explained how "timber stand improvement" enhances the health of the forest by removing unhealthy and less desirable trees rather than "high grading" or cutting the largest, healthiest trees to market. The group continued on through the forest, identifying interesting plants along the way, LaMair said.

"The nature walk in Cane Bottom Hollow was the most popular part of the day, especially when the students found a cave along the trail. It was really just an overhang, and it was surrounded by poison ivy, but there was no stopping them from checking it out," she said. "The same thing happened when one of the boys saw a mushroom down by the stream. I let him go get it, and suddenly half of the students were splashing around and catching crawdads."

After the hike, the group shared a meal featuring a variety of forest-grown ingredients including chili with shiitake mushrooms, salad with walnuts and pecans and blackberry/blueberry muffins. The trip ended with the students planting five redbud trees on the grounds of the One Garden library and seed bank in the old Brixey Church.

"I believe it's important for young people to recognize the value in our Ozarks forests since they will be managing them in the future. We all know about the dire consequences of clear-cutting in the Amazon rainforest, but no one seems to mention that it is also happening right here in Ozark County. Although it might make short-term economic sense to log and bulldoze forestland and turn it into pasture, that is not a sustainable practice. I wanted to expose the students to other land management methods that are profitable, environmentally sound and socially beneficial," LaMair said. "But it's most important for them to just see value in the forests. They may not remember what "timber stand improvement" means, but they will remember the excitement of exploring these spots."



David Haenke, longtime manager of the Alford Forest, shows Lutie School students on a field trip a pile of logs that had been cut for the forest's mushroom operation. The field trip was made possible by funding from the youth educator grant program of the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program from a successfully funded grant proposal written by Sycamore resident Amelia LaMair. The grant program is currently accepting proposals for new projects, and LaMair encourages other local residents and educators to consider applying for funding.

Nature has so much to teach us if we just get out there and pay attention."

This year's proposal guidelines

Information on this year's proposal guidelines and submission requirements can be found at <http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Youth-Educator-Grant-Program>. Proposals will be accepted through 4 p.m. Nov. 10. Applicants with questions can contact Joan Benjamin at benjaminj@lincolnu.edu or 573-681-5545 or 800-529-1342.

LaMair says she wants to encourage more proposals in Ozark County, and she's available to discuss ideas or help anyone who is interested in applying. LaMair can be reached at amelia.lamair@gmail.com or 417-261-1104.

Oct. 22 events will benefit Bob Lawson

Two benefits will be held Saturday, Oct. 22, to help area resident Bob Lawson.

The first benefit will be a poker run starting from the Wasola Volunteer Fire Department on Highway 5 north of Gainesville. Registration begins at noon, and all bikes will be out by 1 p.m. Cost is \$15 per bike and \$10 per rider.

A chili dinner will be held at 5 p.m. at the firehouse. The cost is a free-will donation.

Lawson, an avid rider and lifelong resident of Ozark and Douglas counties,

is battling lymphoma and has been making bi-weekly trips to St. Louis for treatments. All proceeds will go to Lawson and his wife, Bulah, to help pay for medical and travel expenses they have incurred. Lawson is the brother of the late Audean Watson, a longtime Wasola first responder.

For more information or to donate, contact Kelly Thomas at 417-543-1727, Kurtis Thomas at 417-989-1511 or Keith Watson at 417-989-0083. Donations may be mailed to Kelly Thomas, 1026 County Road 123, Wasola, MO 65773.

St. Paul Lutheran to hold Blessing of the Animals ceremony

St. Paul Lutheran Church in West Plains invites area residents to bring their pets to a Blessing of the Animals ceremony to be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 15, in the church parking lot at 291 N. Kentucky Ave., behind Bradford Pharmacy. A color photo certificate of the owner and pet can be ordered, free of charge.

All pets must be on a leash or in a cage. For more information, call the church at 417-256-6685.

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