

USI Trails Project 2011

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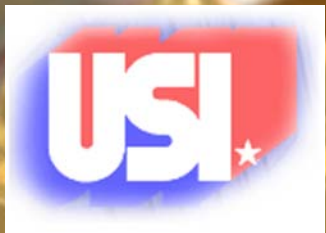
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Project Defined

- The Service Learning Project
- New Beginnings—Trails Project
- Our Partners
- Our Activities
- Interview Study
- Findings
- Implications



Project Purpose—Trails Project

- To create Co-Curricular Service Learning activities for USI student groups and individuals

Short Term Goals:

- Assisting community with development of hiking/biking trails
- Developing USI trails as a part of the community network of trails
- Bringing together USI students with at-risk youth in the community



Project Purpose—Trails Project

Long Term Goals:

- Address health issues within the community
 - **Very high obesity rates, heart disease, cancer**
- Assist with environmental preservation and development of parks



OUR PARTNERS

USI

- Grounds Crew
- AmeriCorps Students
- Greek Life
- Alumni Affairs
- Biology Club
- Business Honorary

Youth Serving Groups

- Boy Scouts
- Girl Scouts
- Carver Community Organization
- YMCA, Caldwell Center
- Youth Resources

Parks/Environmental Groups

- Vanderburgh Soil & Water Conservation
- Evansville Parks & Recreation Dept.
- Wesselman Woods & Nature Preserve
- Howell Wetlands
- Burdette Park
- Master Gardeners

Other Organizations

- EVSC Afterschool Program
- Evansville Area Trails Coalition
- Welborn Baptist Foundation
- Alcoa Group
- Evansville Bicycle Club



Your Own Project

Do you have a project you are working on or would like to start?

Who might your partners be?



Our First Trails Project

- Bent Twig Trails on USI campus – we refurbished trails - mulching, cleaning up litter, placing signs, building steps and rails, planted native plants, worked on widening of the trails



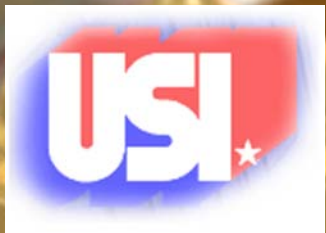
Partnered with :

USI Greek Organizations -- Greek Week – April 22, 2010

USI Grounds Crew

USI Science Education

Master Gardeners



Our Activities

2010/2011 Academic Year

- Make A Difference Day (October 23rd)
- Howell Wetlands (November 3rd)
- Greenway Passage (November 6th)
- Burdette Park (November 10th & 20th)
- MLK Day - USI Trails (January 22nd)
- MLK Day – Greenway Adopt-A-Spot
(March 26th, April 19th, April 29th, May 26th)
- Howell Wetlands (April 7th)
- Trails Work with USI Alumni (April 17th)
- Bicycle Rodeo (April 30th)

*Collaborated with Evansville Trails Coalition to
Develop Many of These Activities*



Trails Flyer



**Service Learning
TRAILS PROJECTS 2011**

**“MAKE A DIFFERENCE...
ONE TRAIL AT A TIME”**

**Volunteer To Be a Part of the Movement!
*Better the Community & Our Environment***

The USI's trails project joins the city-wide effort to improve health and wellness in the community. Service Learning at USI is collaborating with The Welborn Foundation's "move-ment" project, a healthy community initiative aimed at increasing physical activity here in the Evansville area.

With Spring season right around the corner, student volunteers are welcome and much needed. We currently have K-12 organizations who are very eager to volunteer alongside USI students. A few prospective projects for the trails during spring 2011 are: Howell Wetlands, the Greenway, Burdette Park, and continued refurbishing of trails at USI. Also, we will be a lead organization for a Bicycle Rodeo for people of all ages April 16th.

Volunteers get to work with members of organizations such as the YMCA, Carver Community Organization, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and USI Greek Life. Plus, the work completed on the trails makes them easier to use, and more enjoyable for everyone!

Ways You Can Get Involved

- Help recruit volunteers
- Attend & help facilitate work parties
- Mentor youth at work parties
- Join a leadership group that will help schedule events



Make a Difference Day On Campus (October 23rd)

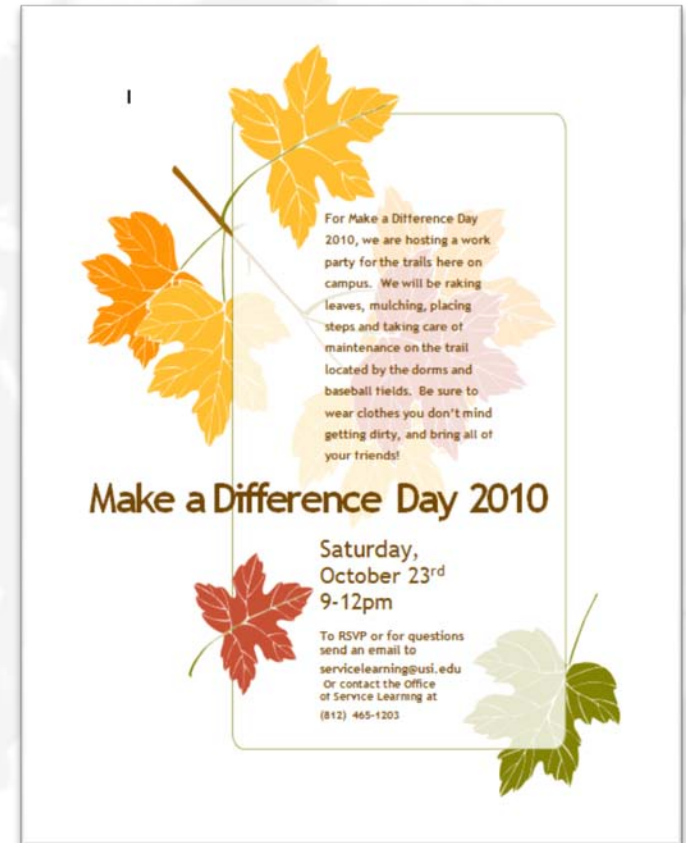
- Raked leaves
- Mulched trails
- Planted native plants
- Placed steps on trails
- Build picnic tables
- Picked up litter
- Installed benches

Partnered with Alcoa Corp.

USI Greek Life

USI Grounds Crew

USI Service Americorps



Flyer for October 23rd work party



Pictures from Make a Difference Day



HOWELL WETLANDS – November 3rd

- Mulched trails
- Pruned shrubs
- General cleanup

Partnered with:

YMCA Caldwell Center
Carver Community Org.
USI Biology Club
USI Americorps



Pictures from Howell Wetlands



Greenway Passage – Garvin Park (November 6th)

- Planted 600 spring bulbs
- General cleanup of area
- Pruned shrubs

Partnered with:

Evansville Greenway Advisory Board

Evansville Parks and Recreation Department

USI Greek Life

Evansville Trails Coalition

Americorps



Burdette Park – November 10th and 20th

- Planted trees
- Raked and removed debris and leaves
- Mentored youth from YMCA and Carver Community Organization
- Educational Q&A

Partnered with:

*YMCA Caldwell Center
Carver Community Org.
Boy Scouts
USI Americorps*



Zachary Garrett,
an AmeriCorps student,
with a child from Carver



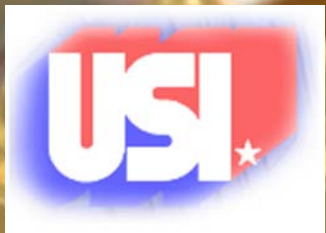
MLK Day Adopt-A-Spot Field Trip (January 17th)

- Tour of Greenway
- Identified areas of interest
- Consulted with Evansville Trails Coalition president
- Developed new ideas for trails projects



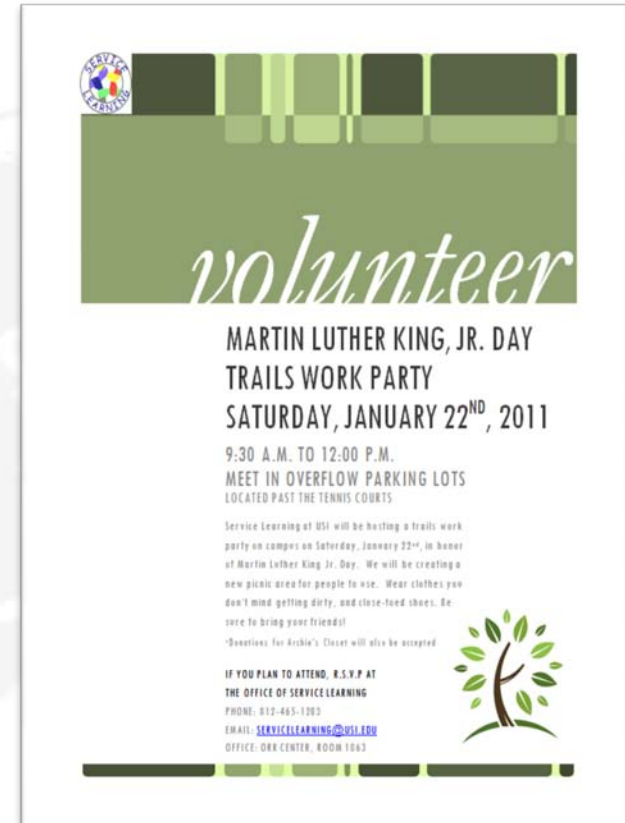
Members of the AmeriCorps Leadership Group on a tour of the Greenway

Partnered with:
*Evansville Trails Coalition
USI Americorps*



MLK Day Campus Trails (January 22nd)

- Constructed and installed picnic table and area
- Cleaned up rock pile, brush and litter to create a picnic area overlooking brook & cleaned up debris along trail
- Talked about the importance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- Mentored members of the Boy Scouts



Flyer for Jan 22nd Cleanup

Partnered with:
*USI Grounds Crew
USI AmeriCorps Students
Boy Scouts*

Pictures from Martin Luther King Day of Service



Adopt-A-Spot Dates (3/26, 4/19, 4/29, 5/26)

“Shirley James Historic Transportation Interpretive Site” -- a stainless steel and wire mesh structure illustrates history of transportation in Evansville, honor the legacy of community advocate, Shirley James.

- Removed sod, composted, planted 300 plants, mulched on March 26.
- More plants and mulching April 19 and 29; river mud clean up May 26



*Flyer for March 26th
Work Party*

Partnered with:

USI Greek Life

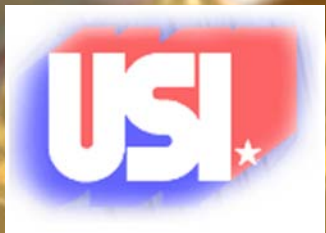
Evansville Parks &

Recreation Dept.

YMCA Caldwell Center

USI summer ROTC students

USI Americorps



Pictures from Adopt-A-Spot



Howell Wetlands (April 7th)

- Mentored youth
- Mulched trails
- General cleanup preparing for Howell Wetlands Earth Day Celebration

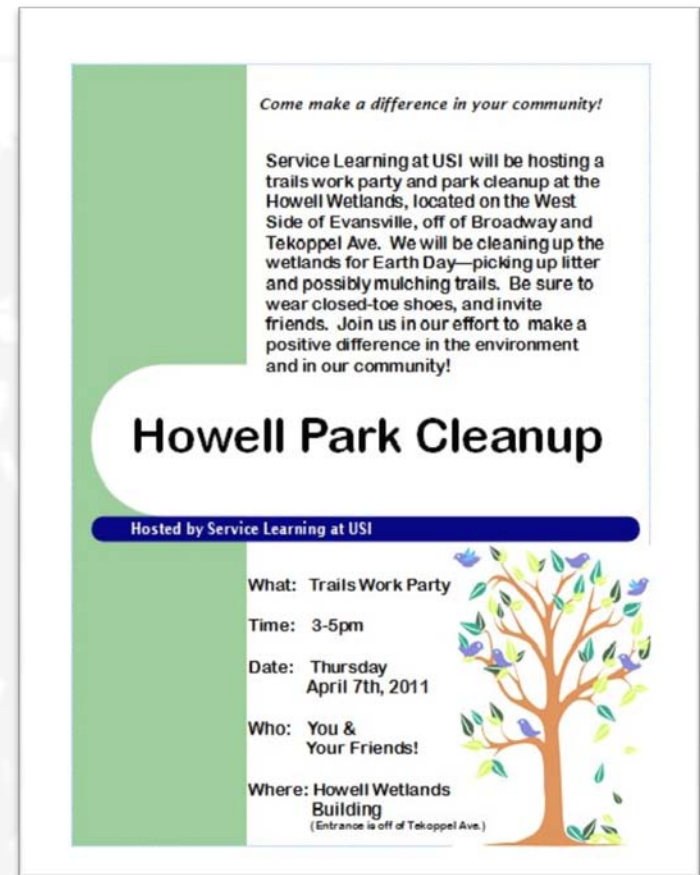
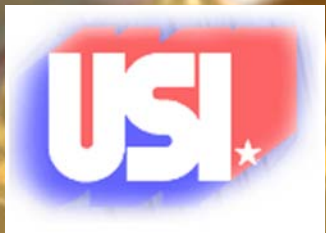
Partnered with:

Wesselman Nature Center

YMCA Caldwell Center

USI Greek Life

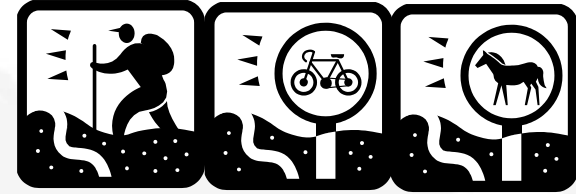
USI Americorps



Flyer for April 7th Cleanup

USI Alumni Trails Project (April 17th)

- Trails cleanup/mulching
- Refurbishing fire bowl and amphitheater
- Planting fruit/oak trees
- Painting garden fence
- Installing steps and benches
- Cleaning out buildings
- Picking up litter



Partnered with:

USI Grounds Crew

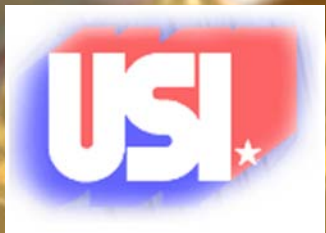
USI Alumni Association

Volunteer USI

USI Greek Life

USI Business Honorary

Youth Resources



Bicycle Rodeo (April 30th)

- Teaching children how to ride safely
- Bicycle giveaway from USI/EVSC
- Safety basics
- Mentoring children
- Biking to Shirley James Memorial on Greenway Passage
- Activities at Memorial



Partnered with:

YMCA Caldwell Center

Evansville Bicycle Club

EVSC Afterschool Program

USI Greek Life

Girl Scouts

USI Americorps





Interview Study

- Depth interviews with 16 stakeholders
- Interviews taped and fully transcribed
- Analyzed Using Constant Comparative (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)



Theoretical Perspective

Identity Theory

- Individuals prefer interactions that confirm sense of self
- Self perceptions are highly rooted in one's place in the social structure
- Individuals strive to play one's roles in accord with ideal notions of role expectations and internalized sense of self
- Commitment follows from these principles



Interview Sample

USI

- 1 Support Staff
- 3 Program Administrators
- 1 Faculty Member
- 1 Graduate Student
- 1 Undergraduate Student
- 1 Potential Americorps Student Member

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- 2 Park Superintendents
- 1 Biologist
- 1 President of Local Bicycle Club
- 1 President of Soil and Water Conversation Group
- 1 Director of Afterschool Program in School System
- 1 Director of YMCA Outreach Center
- 1 Coordinator or Local Advocacy Group



Findings

- How They Got Involved
- Motivations
- Understanding of Goals
- Understanding Stakeholders
- Suggestions for the Future
- Perceptions of How the Project Went
- Benefits of Project
- Challenges of Project
- Personal Reactions/Changes-Impact



How They Got Involved

Many divergent interests converged for this project—many numerous and strongly held

Most volunteers were recruited by the project coordinator, placing that person as the hub of the communication network.

- Part of their jobs

- “...through my job as grad assistant with Housing and Residence Life, Eagle Road Crew was just designed to get Housing and Residence Life students involved in service learning opportunities.”

- Another institutional context that influenced how they saw the project



Motivations

- Make USI trails accessible
- Create trails in and around the city
- Create and maintain trails on campus and in community
- Increase physical activity in city
- Increase/maintain biodiversity
- Involve students/youth
- Religious/service

Your Own Project

- What would motivate the partners for your project?
- Why would they want to get involved?
- What would their interests be?





Understanding of Goals for Project

- Make USI trails safer/more accessible
- Promote USI
- Promote a healthier lifestyle
- *“It’s to provide an opportunity for people to exercise or just have an opportunity to walk the trails, either for recreation or for their health aspects or as an alternative transportation route.”*
- Bring USI students with different age groups together
- *“You’ve got different groups of kids that wouldn’t normally be together working – I thought that was really neat idea.”*
- Help get the youth interested in outdoors and being active
- *The kids of today aren’t naturally drawn to the outdoors—much differently than a generation or two ago. Through these kinds of activities they’re a little bit more prone to at least hold an awareness or some interest...”*



Understanding of Goals for Project

- Promote their own institutional priorities
 - Burdette — connecting USI to the park
 - “Connecting a university to a park, which gives both of them access to each other. A lot of students that work here, if they work on campus, it gives them a way to get to work without even starting up an engine.”
 - Introducing people to local resources
 - “It’s to introduce people that might not know about us as an organization; for the parks department, you know, it might get more usage out of the stuff that they’re doing. Which, if you get more people using it, they can possibly get more funding to help keep it up and improve it.”
 - Biological preservation
 - “Since it’s along Pigeon Creek, there’s the environmental aspect of the greenway; it’s preservation of that waterway. We see this very evident now this year with all the recent flooding—the need and the impacts of how creeks [work] ... when waters rise and how that affects people all around...”

Your Own Project

- What would the goals be for your own project?
- How would you communicate your goals to your partners?
- Might there be some competing goals among them? What might they be?





Understanding of Stakeholders

- Users

- Campus child care center uses new Bent Twig Trail
- USI Faculty and Students
- Students also benefit from USI/Burdette Trail

- Workers

- USI students
- Youth at YMCA Caldwell Outreach Center, Carver Community Organization, and Youth Resources
- USI alumni and employees



Understanding of Stakeholders

- Contributors
 - The Zoo
 - Parks Foundation/Department
 - Howell Wetlands/ Wesselman Nature Society
 - Soil and Water Conservation District
 - USI Physical Plant
 - Evansville Area Trails Coalition
 - Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation
- Entire community
 - “..all of the Evansville community.”
 - “The stakeholders are the entire community of Evansville.”
 - “The people who *should* be interested is pretty much anybody who uses it, but that’s not always the case.”

How the Project Went

Work was done successfully!

- Trails were fixed up, and have come a long way, beautification...
- *"So far, it's been fairly successful. We've really done a great job on the trails. There's a lot more out there... Anne is coming up with new ideas, and I think that helps, because if you do it the same way over and over, it can get stale."*
- All types of people working together
- *"This was a first time event for us and I am going to say I was very pleased on how everything went so smoothly. It was just wonderful to see all the ages coming together to help with the trails."*
- Good turnout of volunteers
- *"Well, I am pleasantly surprised they are going a lot better than what I thought. I have a lot more participation. We even had members of Alcoa come and help with this project."*



How the Project Went

- People invested
 - getting students in community/connecting to the outdoors environment
 - *“The fact that it brought in so many partners and students... But getting the students out in any way is a good thing.”*
 - people getting exercise/fit
 - new groups learning about biking
 - students using and talking about the trails



Benefits

Trails improved

- Safer

- *When we first went down the Bent Twig Trail the whole section was kind of a washout, and after some renovating... it's a very nice stair step down, a rope hang on... so, you kind of have a railing to help balance with."*

- Upgraded, looks better!

- *"We actually planted... what we call a tree memorial... people can buy a tree and plant it on part of the trail... that's a way of reforestation it without a cost to the tax payers."*

- More accessible

- *"It seems like our trails are a hidden secret to the community, and it's opening up that secret*

- Awareness

- *"I hope that the information about the trails is made public. I think there is some work that has already been put on the university website."*





Benefits

Building networks

- Alcoa and USI grounds crew
- Caldwell center and bicycle club

Health

- *“...fitness programs for the community and having an education element for it as far as tree identification and any/or other educational aspects.”*

Involving Youth

- *“To me personally...I saw the kids working on things and saw them excited to work on the trail—so that is my personal gratification. The community is going to have great areas to get out and enjoy life more.”*



Challenges

Communication

- getting info. straight between partners
- letting people in community know what's happening
 - *“Even though we work in the same department, I was not always aware of when the work days were.”*
- reaching those people/motivating them
- preparing volunteers – flip-flops
 - *“The preparedness of the volunteers: showing up in flip flops, not realizing it was going to be muddy out there after a night of rain.”*
- staying in touch with volunteers – Eagle Scout and Burdette/USI Trail
- incorporating into classes
 - *“Perhaps... integrating it a little bit more into some science and other activities here on campus.”*
- promotion to community

Challenges (con.)

Schedules

- afterschool youth with USI students – weekends/afterschool
- *“Probably just the time frame right after school was a big issue... it kind of held up the group if we were late or if we were the only group coming.”*
- of events – aspects of bicycle rodeo, how much time will it take?
- getting students to show up when they are scheduled
- logistics – schedules of different groups working on same project
- *“Different groups showed up at different times, but that’s kinda hard to fix... Unless you bring ‘em yourselves, which is difficult with that large amount of people... The logistics of it.”*
- timing not always predictable— requirement of the plants



Challenges (con.)

Resources

- funding
- staff
- need bike, helmet, etc.
- provide music for work parties

Differing values/goals

- native plants
 - *“Some people want nothing but native trees and...I understand that, but I found out...with this tree memorial, the people, ---’Well, that’s dad’s favorite tree’...and you know, it’s not necessarily an oak or a maple!...some people don’t want none of this invasiveness going on... but if you go out and look what’s growing naturally, I was told 40 percent of it is not native to the United States...”*
- outdoor/environmental – are young people as interested today as young people were in past?



Challenges (con.)

Weather

Motivating students without requiring it

- *"I felt like it was hard to get students to really commit. They would say, 'Oh that's so awesome,' but then they would never show up, so that was kind of frustrating."*
- Student leadership wanted
- Recruiting Volunteers



Suggestions for the Future

USI trails

- Taxi bikes

- *“One idea that I really liked down at University of West Florida was they had what were called taxi bikes. ..they just painted all these bikes that were left behind yellow ... They would leave them on campus, and you would just put ‘em at stations.”*

- Make events annual

- *“I coordinated the Bluebird Trail here for 15 years, and we had a set date, we’d always advertise our cleanup day as the last Saturday in February; and in those probably 14 of the 15 years when we had community-advertised days, people from the community would come.*

- USI trails—more promotion to USI students

- *“I wonder what kind of benefit there might be for setting that up, just having someone that goes on around and says, “Hey, did you know that obesity is at this rate? Jay Leno was mocking us the other night—he said, “The new city with the highest obesity is Evansville, Indiana. Evansville, Indiana: Who has even heard of that?”...try to find a way in which they have a personal interest...’Hey, do you like to bike?”*



Suggestions for the Future

USI trails

- Donation/suggestion boxes on trails
 - Maps/signage of trails
 - *“Most definitely mapping, because there’s a lot of woods out there, and it doesn’t take much for one person to get disoriented. I found two people, I can recall, lost out there, where I’ve had to get them back to campus.”*
 - Trails on south side of campus
- Plant identification – geotagging – interpretive
 - *“I could see some more work being done along the educational realm of it, as far as identification of plants, trees and such.”*





Suggestions for the Future

Burdette/USI trail

- Outdoor classrooms for USI
- *...I think that there's an opportunity for USI to have outdoor classrooms that would be... beneficial to the kids... And, even if you just wanted to take the kids out in the spring after a long winter..."*
- St. Jude Run
- *"USI could have a run that starts there in the fall and in the spring...they're like 10 or 15 dollars.*
- Joint up-keep plan

Obesity issue

- Get ahold of that to push for funding
- *"Somebody should get a hold of this obesity thing and . . . try to organize it. I just think there's going to be a lot of money available soon because . . . we're the worst..."*



Suggestions for the Future

City trails

- Complete the industrial corridor
- Develop trail along abandoned railroad track on HWY 41 S
- Trail along Eagle Slough on south side of town
- Develop Trail to Newburgh (nearby city)
- Pigeon Creek cleanup – Day of Service
- *“I’ve had one group of U of E kids go down to the creek to do a little bit of a cleanup. They really seemed to enjoy that.”*
- Better utilization of trails

Program

- Keep pushing through
- *“I guess keep on pushing through... I think it’s one of those things where, over time, as people develop their own interest in...walking it and running it or running bikes on it—then they’re going to do it as they become aware of it.”*

Suggestions for the Future

Involve More Kids

- More EVSC afterschool sites
 - *“I’d love to continue to develop the relationship that we have with them at EVSC that would develop more after-school opportunities. As I mentioned, it’s very difficult for us to do things on weekends, and it’s very difficult to do things during the school day.”*
- EVSC schools that can do projects during the day
 - *“Now we do have some schools, including the Academy for Innovative Studies, that have time during the school day; it’s built into their curriculum.”*
- More after school activities
- Summer programs





Personal Reactions/Changes - Impact

FEELING GOOD ABOUT THEIR ROLE

- sense of pride in starting this all off, how it “took off”
- *“I think it was a lot of sense of pride in updating it and bringing it back to how it was at one time...”*
- having a vision and getting the funding
- *“To be able to have a vision, get the money, do it...not necessarily come out of the tax payer and neighborhood's profit, but to be able to get federal funds...”*
- went to USI, proud of what it is doing
- *“I support you guys. I came to school here, so my husband and I support you. I want to make sure that the native, the natural area of USI stays the same.”*
- Working with youth
- *I feel good about myself for doing stuff like this... I've always been interested in kids... in them improving.”*

Personal Reactions/Changes

FEELING GOOD ABOUT ROLE

- happy with turnout – “got a kick out of that”
- *“I’ve been shocked at some of the turnout. I’ve been at USI 18 years, and I’ve had some small...fraternities approach me, they wanted to have work days and all that, [they’ll say] ‘Oh, we’ll have 80, 90 people here,’ and 12 show up... And with this one we were promised there were going to be 50 to 60 people, and there were 50 to 60 people. So it was impressive to see the commitment that some of these kids are starting to have nowadays. I got a kick out of that.”*
- made me want to enroll in school and look at another career
- *“It has made me actually want to enroll in school...look at another career. I really do like USI... I just needed the momentum from Anne.”*
- personal satisfaction
- *“Half of it was just to carry on what was already occurring, but then the other half of it was just personal satisfaction in wanting to be part of the Evansville community... it opened my eyes to a lot of what was actually going on in the world beyond the college walls...that shaped me a lot as a human being...I wanted that for other people...I think we definitely have a culture that’s very inward thinking...’How can I have fun this moment?’...not one of altruism.”*



Personal Reactions/Changes

SEEING POWER OF COLLABORATION

- *"I do this routinely...things tend to come together in Evansville because we have a lot of people that are willing to make things work for kids... [BUT] I really do think there are some ways to collaborate more fully to provide programming"...*
- *...anytime a community can work together to do a project, I think everyone benefits...I've found people are willing to help out. If there are issues that need to be done, somebody can come up with a way to do this...we never thought the landscaping would be [possible]...we couldn't have done it in house.*
- *It was good to work with the same set of kids, knowing where they come from, and getting to work beside them...Also working with other students...a lot of them had some really good ideas...I think it's given me more of an idea of what it means to be a community...having all of the drastically different organizations working together for one cause...More hands can do more work...If I see a need and I feel like I know people who can help..I wouldn't hesitant to try to get them involved...I just feel like more of a leader...*





Personal Reactions/Changes

CARE ABOUT ISSUES

- I didn't know about the trails
 - *"I've always been interested in outdoors...I went to USI and got a biology degree. So most of my experiences are either... from what I learned ... in school or was taught my grandparents or my dad ... since you guys have been doing it...I've learned more... I never realized how much trail work and stuff we had in Evansville."*
- Being Aware
 - *"I have always helped. I think the trails are a great normality to the campus. I walk quite often...It is something I enjoy...I guess I have been more aware of what they can do and how we can get forces to get things done."*

Your Own Project

- What might you expect your partners to get out of working on your project, both personally and professionally?
- How can you help ensure that they will get the most possible from their work with you?





Implications

- Investments in these projects spring initially from our own interests, placement within institutions, in roles and networks of expectations that confirm our identities.
- Involving partners requires attending to their needs, even if not your own project goals.
- Working in coalitions can help them develop broader interests, “open their eyes.”
- It is a combination of feeling good about oneself, seeing the bigger picture, and feeling something was accomplished that produces satisfaction among our partners.

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QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?

