



Teens on Farms

Developing Youth, Sowing Seeds for the Future

The agriculture heritage of Delta County is still alive, with many small farms in operation. As in generations past, these farms offer an important opportunity for educating and developing youth. Yet teens and farmers no longer naturally pair up for employment. The Teens on Farms project is designed to reunite these two sectors to their mutual benefit. The innovative approach could have broad application outside Delta County, and in economic sectors other than agriculture.



Our mission is to provide confidence and leadership skills to youth in the North Fork Valley of Delta County, Colorado, and beyond.



The project's innovative approach involves building a team of youth to serve small family farms throughout the summer. An adult mentor will work with the teens to ensure meaningful learning experiences and to foster a group dynamic. The adult will also interface with the farmers to identify work opportunities for youth and schedule youth in groups or as individuals for farm work. Teens will be introduced to the rich variety of farming operations in the area. Life skills will be developed in the area of communication, work ethic, and appreciation for sustainable systems.

When it comes to youth development, classrooms have their place. Sports have their place. Technology has its place. The “Teens on Farms” project offers something very, very different: The chance for any willing youth to get their hands dirty, to stretch themselves, to build initiative that cannot be taught any other way than by doing meaningful work.



Teens on Farms, Cont.

Status as of November 1, 2008:
Phase I-Project Development

The Teens on Farms project was formally launched in October of 2008, thanks to the generous support from local sponsors:

- Delta County;
- Cocker Kids Foundation;
- Delta Conservation District;
- Western Colorado Food and Agriculture Council;
- Kampe Foundation.

Other stakeholders involved include the Delta County School District, FFA and 4-H clubs, and the Valley Organic Growers Association (VOGA).



This project was inspired in 2007 by a cattle farmer with Parkinson's disease and his 14-year old farm hand. According to the Colorado Work Force Center, there is no similar project anywhere in the state, or in a three-state area (Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah).



Project Overview: Teens on Farms is part of the Western Colorado Food and Agriculture Council (WCFAC), a local 501(c)3. The four-year project will include a distinct planning phase (Phase I). Sensible planning and a proactive approach to problems is expected to curtail costs for project implementation, and lead to a successful project. The project will start with 8 to 12 teenagers and up to 30 farms and is likely to grow each year. Following operations (Phase II) the project is expected to become partially or wholly self-sustaining (Phase III, evaluation).

Phase, Objective.	People Involved	Cost (\$ needed)	Timeline
Status as of Nov 2008: Phase I, Development			
Phase I Project development, community input and planning; youth orientation, fundraising for first year (2009).	25-35	\$14,000 (3,000)	4 months 11/08 -3/09
Phase II Carry out operations over three seasons using an iterative 4-step model (plan, implement, evaluate, and correct) in order to develop and mature the program.	50-60	\$60,000 per year (\$60,000)	3 years: 2009-2011
Phase III Evaluate overall success of the project and create a plan for sustaining operations. Reach out to other areas of the state and country.	TBD	TBD	6 months

Teens on Farms will create enthusiasm for agriculture among youth, as well as fulfill labor needs for local farmers. Meaningful work experiences will not only shape the lives of the youth involved but also the future of agriculture in this area. ***This project needs you to get off the ground! Please consider joining this group of sponsors, or participating in the project! Contact Cassandra Sherk for more information, Ph 872-3559, 9264 3200 Rd Hotchkiss, shenkca@yahoo.com.***



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