

4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach

Outdoor Environment-based Education

with K-12 Youth, Educators, and School Communities

WHAT does 4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach offer to schools?

This program focuses on providing **equitable access to Nature studies and experiences for all students from Kindergarten through Grade 12**. To do this, we may

- exchange ideas with school administrators, staff, and teachers about incorporating **outdoor hands-on environment-based education** at school during the school day
- demonstrate **activities across the curriculum** with direct connections to Nature
- foster **student-driven outdoor investigations and action**
- promote innovative ways to boost **environmental literacy**
- help develop and maintain **native plant habitats** that serve as **outdoor learning labs**

WHY is it important?

Connecting Youth with Nature on a regular basis

- **invites curiosity and wonder**
- **engages the senses**, resonates, and inspires
- offers children an **opportunity to decompress and rejuvenate**—a mental health reset
- helps students **practice life skills** related to
 - ❖ observation, investigation, description, classification, illustration, documentation, research, and reflection



WHO are we?

- **4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach** is a local, dynamic, youth development program of **Virginia Cooperative Extension-York/Poquoson** focusing on youth outdoor environment-based education.
- This unique program is comprised solely of **community volunteers**, many of whom are **Master Gardeners** or **Virginia Master Naturalists**. Our core volunteers engage in ongoing professional development in youth outdoor education and native plant habitat stewardship.
- We are *highly resourceful* volunteers. The program has no permanent source of funding, so we obtain materials and other resources through grants and/or financial and in-kind donations.

HOW do we promote environment-based education in the school setting?

Each of our core group volunteers matches up with a specific school and serves as a dedicated program liaison, aka **Outreach Partner**, for an entire school year, often longer, at no cost to the school or school division. Outreach Partners receive ongoing training and support in order to

- **empower and equip individual teachers** or teams to engage students in outdoor education
- **model and provide assistance as long as needed** to teachers with projects, lessons, and activities
- **provide environment-based lesson plans** that may be swapped with traditional lesson plans so that teachers are not increasing their workload to teach outdoors
- **facilitate access** to our program's **network of knowledge, research, tools, and resources**
- **advise and assist with the school's native plant habitat**

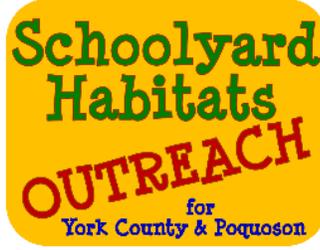
WHERE do we operate?

Currently, this program is active at thirteen public schools in York County and Poquoson. Outreach Partners visit their selected school on a regular basis to deliver outreach, share resources with teachers, and help maintain the native plant habitat at the school. Otherwise, we work from home. The business address for this program is the Extension Office at 5338-I Geo. Wash. Memorial Hwy, Yorktown, VA 23692.

WHEN might you expect us?

4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach recently observed its 10-year service anniversary, and our work will continue for the foreseeable future.

- Teachers may schedule Outreach Partners for classroom visits and **outdoor adventures in learning, no matter the season!**
- We help facilitate visits from other **local specialists** like birders and beekeepers **upon request**.
- We offer our services and expertise **during school and after hours, throughout the calendar year**.
- Habitats require year-round stewardship, and we help with that when needed. Group members embark on a quick **tour of all the habitats every July** during which we collect a range of data.



4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach

a service program of **Virginia Cooperative Extension-York/Poquoson**

Program website: <https://www.yorkcounty.gov/863/4-H-Schoolyard-Habitats-Outreach>

How do I get in contact with a school's Outreach Partner?

Contact us by email for this information.

SchoolyardHabitatsOutreach@gmail.com

[If a school doesn't have a designated Outreach Partner, we appreciate any assistance to advertise the open position throughout the school community and beyond.]

Our group members acknowledge the immense contributions of founder, **Barbara Dunbar**, who passed away suddenly in February 2022. She inspired us, taught us, and infused us with the knowledge and responsibility to proceed with the mission to connect Youth with Nature.



Program-level funding is and has been obtained exclusively through grants and financial and/or in-kind donations from individuals as well as the organizations depicted below. Individual schools, parent-teacher organizations, and student clubs and councils also obtain funding and contributions of goods and services for related projects at individual schools; those additional sponsors vary widely by school and are not fully reflected here.

*** This listing does not imply endorsement of the program by these organizations. ***



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