

Elizabeth Moore to receive ICF scholarship

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Submitted

Elizabeth Moore, standing, who will receive an Illinois Conservation Foundation Conservation Achievement (college) Scholarship instructing students at Denkman Elementary School, Rock Island how to properly harvest radishes from a vegetable garden located at the school.

Elizabeth Moore, a soon-to-graduate student at Rock Island High School, is one of just three seniors across the Land of Lincoln who will receive a 2016 Conservation Achievement Scholarship from the Illinois Conservation Foundation — an arm of the Department of Natural Resources. She will get \$2,000 to apply toward specific college expenses.

Applicants for the ICF Conservation Achievement Scholarship program must be outstanding high school seniors who have demonstrated effective, voluntary, long-term dedication to the preservation, protection, enhancement and/or promotion of Illinois' natural resources.

Over her four years at Rocky, Moore has been an active member of the school's Environmental Action Club, currently serving as VP.

Over the past several years, I've had the opportunity to cross paths with the EAC a few times.

Without doubt, that organization is a group of dynamic youngsters led by dynamic faculty who not only do positive things for our environment, but even more importantly, learn how to live making the best use of our resources and minimizing waste as much as possible.

So as part of the EAC and with her own family, Moore has participated in community projects including removal of invasive species at Nahant Marsh and Mississippi River clean-up as part of Xstream Clean-up with Chad Pregracke's Living lands & Waters organization.

At Rocky, she is in charge of the recycling program to ensure that all possible paper products on campus are recycled each week.

Those projects and activities are excellent positives for our environment, but what really struck me is what Moore did on her own.

“My family has a large vegetable garden in our back yard where we grow food,” Moore said. “I love that and feel very strongly that we should eat locally as much as possible. And that we should practice sustainability as much as possible. I like to bake and make much of my own food.”

With those thoughts in mind, early last spring the then high school junior set out to show and teach some youngsters how they can grow (at least) some of their own food. She planned to plant, nurture, cultivate and harvest a garden at a Rock Island elementary school.

“I chose Denkmann School not only because it's fairly close to where we live, but also because it has quite a bit of green space,” she explained. “I got permission for the garden and was successful getting a \$250 grant from the Rock Island Schools Development Fund to pay for some of the materials needed for the 800 square foot garden — like fencing and posts for tomato plants to grow up on.

She arranged for Denkmann student council members and their adviser, Mrs. Trace Timm, to be co-gardeners, so grades three through six would all be active partners with gardening.

She then visited several local retailers who agreed to help by offering equipment, tools and materials at reduced cost or even donation.

“I then designed a vegetable garden with cool weather plants followed by warmer weather veggies, and the kids and I planted all on nice straight rows. We grew, cultivated and harvested radishes, lettuce, spinach, bell peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, cantaloupe, carrots, snap peas and sweet corn — and a few flowers. We had a terrific corn crop!

“I was hoping that what we harvested could be eaten in the school cafeteria, but health rules wouldn't allow that. So we had a small farmer's market at school and sold some, some was eaten by students and some was purchased by teachers — I made some pickles out of cucumbers.

“We kept the garden going through the summer when school wasn't in session. I'd text the kids that I was going to be at the garden and some would always show up to help — sometimes parents as well. The kids were very protective of and defended the garden. We had no vandalism.”

I recently caught up with Moore at the 2016 Denkmann garden. Only radishes, lettuce and spinach had been planted and was ready for harvest at this time. She was in the process of showing nine attentive students how to properly harvest each of the plants. Upon picking, the harvested plants went into paper bags — to be taken home for a salad that night.

I asked Moore what would become of “her” garden project when she goes off to Carleton College in the fall. That's when I noticed a wee bit of sadness in her voice — as she would no longer be involved in something near and dear. But then she related that several Denkmann teachers would not only keep the garden going, but also use it as a school science project.

I think that's how one could spell success.