



**Reaching Environmental Awareness and Action in Communities Together**

## About REAACT

Although there might be ample environmental education resources within proximity of **diverse communities**, opportunities are rare that intentionally seek involvement by resident young people and their adult partners in exploring their local environments and experiencing engaging, science-based **environmental learning** using today's **technology** tools.

The "Reaching Environmental Awareness and Action in Communities Together (REAACT)" initiative provides an opportunity for 4-H to enhance existing and create new models for how we work with diverse communities, deliver environmental education and use technology as a learning tool. The goal is for diverse youth to achieve an educated understanding of the natural and built environments that make up their communities and the importance of those resources to how they live.

### Intentional Partnerships with Diverse Communities

The Michigan 4-H Youth Development REAACT Initiative intentionally seeks partnerships with diverse communities that have not traditionally been involved with our programs in the past. This would include young people and adults from communities representing racial, ethnic, ability/disability, geographic and class diversity. Michigan 4-H Youth Development seeks to then co-create environmental education opportunities with its diverse partners that allow young people to engage in hands-on, science-based environmental learning that can lead to community-based stewardship and action.

These opportunities respect and reflect the interests, awareness and knowledge within our partner communities and turn that collaboration into effective environmental learning for youth.

## REAACT Project Goals

Our goal is to pilot experiences over three years, through REAACT, with youth from diverse communities in which they:

1. Connect to the environments they live in through direct, community-based learning experiences.
2. Develop an awareness of and concern for the environment.
3. Use appropriate scientific processes to understand the environment and the roles humans play in the environment.
4. Think about and explore how technology can be used to study the environment and how it can influence the environment — both for advancing and sharing knowledge and for transforming natural spaces positively and negatively.
5. Work to prevent and resolve problems in their environments.
6. Work to improve environments for the benefit of both humans and ecosystems as a whole.
7. See themselves as professionals who can have an impact on environmental issues.

(The Walk, 2000)

We seek to approach environmental learning in ways that are respectful and relevant for the diverse communities we are partnered with. Our educational approach will reflect the recommendations and guidelines suggested by the National Consortium for Environmental Education and Training in the Urban Environmental Education Toolbox which suggests three key approaches:

- That learning reflects use and study of the green spaces and natural areas within the communities to develop knowledge of and appreciation for the natural environment.
- That learning reflects use and study of the built environment, including architecture, land use and infrastructure.
- That learning includes service and action by uniting science-based environmental awareness with citizenship skills.

## Working Together Towards Positive Change

At the end of the three years, our goal is to have identified and documented models of programming success for increasing community engagement aimed at environmental awareness and stewardship with youth and adults from diverse communities. We will work toward and evaluate for positive change in:

- Youth (both older teen and younger) awareness and knowledge of community-based environmental issues and opportunities.
- Youth awareness, use and stewarding of their environment for the good of the community.
- The number of community members aware of and actively engaged in environmental learning and stewardship.
- Michigan 4-H Youth Development's ability to create new partnerships with diverse communities that strengthen concern for and action around environmental issues.
- Michigan 4-H Youth Development's ability to engage in, document and learn from an organizational change process that better meets the needs of diverse youth, adults and communities.
- Integrating technology use and literacy into the environmental learning process.
- Youth communications skills, civic engagement and workforce preparation skills.
- Youth academic skills in math, science and social science.
- Adult (parent and volunteer) awareness, knowledge and stewardship of community-based environmental learning opportunities and issues.

## Key to Success

Key to the success of the project will be strong community involvement and partnerships between youth and adults in diverse communities, industry partners, community-based environmental groups, and Michigan State University Extension professionals and faculty members.

The REACT initiative is supported by grants to the Michigan 4-H Foundation from the **Dow Chemical Company Foundation** and the **DTE Energy Foundation**.

For more information on this initiative, contact:

- **Andrea Grix**, 4-H REACT Educational Program Coordinator, 231-829-3421
- **Norm Lownds**, 4-H Science & Technology Program Coordinator, 517-355-5191, ext. 349
- **Karen Pace**, 4-H Diversity and Inclusive Programming Coordinator, 517-432-7628
- **Judy Ratkos**, 4-H Environmental & Outdoor Education Program Coordinator, 517-432-7613
- **Dianne Ruonavaara**, 4-H REACT Evaluation Specialist, 517-432-7609
- **Cheryl Howell**, Executive Director, Michigan 4-H Foundation, 517-353-6692, ext. 416



MSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. Michigan State University Extension educational programs and materials are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Margaret A. Bethel, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The name 4-H and the emblem consisting of a four-leaf clover with stem and the "H" on each leaflet are protected under Title 18 U.S.C. 707.

09:16:05-AM