

# High Rocks 2011-2012 Programs: at a glance...

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## High Rocks Educational Corporation Program Evaluations September 1, 2011- August 31, 2012

# High Rocks 2011-2012 Programs: at a glance...

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## **Mission, Vision, Objectives**

*High Rocks is a thriving center for youth empowerment, leadership, and education. We are committed to being a place-based educational and economic force in rural West Virginia.*

### **Our Mission**

***The High Rocks mission is to educate, empower, and inspire young West Virginia women.***

### **Our Vision**

*We want to provide pathways out of poverty for our youth, giving them viable options for success in their home communities and abroad. We envision sustainable local economies that take advantage of our rich human and natural resources. We seek to inspire a culture of learning in our area that prepare rural Appalachian youth with the skills and ideas to drive change locally and on the national stage.*

### **Our Objectives**

- 1. Teenage Girls' Success**
  - a. To build clear thinking, confidence, creativity and a culture of success among teenage girls.
- 2. Intergenerational Women's Development**
  - a. To create a multigenerational network of support for the healthy development of young women.
- 3. Young People's Leadership, Women and Men**
  - a. To strengthen leadership capabilities of young women and men, encouraging them to help each other and contribute to their communities.
- 4. Transformational Education**
  - a. To create and or sponsor educational programs that provide the environment and support for personal growth: physical, social, spiritual, emotional and intellectual.
- 5. Younger Adults, Growth and Support**
  - a. To explore and implement new ways of educating and supporting young adults who are interested in growing as leaders, teachers, and active citizens.
- 6. Partnership**
  - a. To share our philosophy and forge partnerships with other organizations and individuals to advance our mission and objectives.

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## Our Reach in 2011-2012

**Number of youth served in High Rocks Academy and Community programs: 259**

- 120 HR girls, 46 other teen participants, 33 elementary school UYN participants, 60 middle school students who participated in school-based activities

**Total Estimated Contact Hours provided by High Rocks Academy and Community Programs: 25,557**

**Number of Adults served: 136**

- Parents (both High Rocks and Use Your Noodle programs), adult participants in creative writing workshops, ongoing participants in Youth Forum/Recovery group meetings

**Number of Individuals directly participating in public education or public awareness activities: 224**

- Audience members and attendees at one time events: Song School performance, A&B Festival, Chili and Verse, Recovery Forum

**Additional youth and adults reached through Farm 2 School, Local Foods and Grow Appalachia Programs: 570**

- Including 519 youth served through school based programs and 51 community members through GA.

**Total Youth served in our 2011-2012 Program Year through High Rocks Academy, Community Programs, and Local Foods/Farm 2 School Programming: 732**

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## Contact Hours, by Program

High Rocks Educational Corporation has evolved into an umbrella organization for 4 different program pieces:

	<b>Program Contact Hours*</b>
<b>1. High Rocks Academy for Girls</b>	
a. Admissions and Recruiting	9000 (estimate)
b. New Beginnings Camp	4508
c. Camp Steele	4200 (down from 5880 expected pre-derecho)
d. Junior Counselors	1470
e. Tutoring/Girls Night	964
f. Mentoring	420
g. College Access and Scholarships	845
h. Support for Alums	150 (estimate)
i. Youth Advisory Board	300 (estimate)
<b>2. Community Programs and Partnerships</b>	
a. Youth Community Action	2239
b. Arts Education for Youth	330
c. Use Your Noodle	1321
d. School and Community Partnerships	260
e. STAY Project	
<b>3. The Teaching Project</b>	
a. AmeriCorps	24,850 service hours
b. Summer Internships	3000 (estimate)
c. Spring and Fall College Crews	300 (estimate, down from 1100)
d. Conferences, Outreach and Advocacy	<i>will track for 2012-2013</i>
e. Emerging Leaders Network	<i>will track for 2012-2013</i>
<b>4. Local Foods Initiatives</b>	
a. Grow Appalachia	<i>will track for 2012-2013</i>
b. Farm2School Pilot Program	<i>will track for 2012-2013</i>



\*1 Contact Hour is defined as 1 child having 1 hour of programming. If you taught a 30 minute class to 6 students, your class would have provided 3 contact hours.

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## High Rocks Academy for Girls

High Rocks seeks to serve girls of promise that will benefit from our programs and carry them back to their families and communities.

1. The total number of High Rocks Girls in 2011-2012: **120**
  - This includes both graduating seniors and new girls who joined over the summer, and is a **15% increase** from the previous year.
2. Total active girls in the program going in to this year: **97**
3. Projected total number of girls for the coming program year (including new recruits): **125**

## Admissions and Recruiting

Each spring, High Rocks staff visits 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Greenbrier, Nicholas, and Pocahontas counties to give presentations at their schools. Older girls may also join High Rocks by completing an application and High Rocks service hours.

In **recruiting and outreach** this spring:

- Staff and AmeriCorps were in **4** schools doing outreach to **350 potential participants** about our program
- **40** teens applied to the program.
  - **35** Seventh-graders; 20 from Greenbrier County, 9 from Nicholas, and 6 from Pocahontas.
  - **5** older girls who applied for Camp Steele.
- We conducted **36** interviews, and a total of **26 new girls** joined High Rocks through summer programs.

Quotations from HR applications, in response to why they want to come to High Rocks:

*"[I'm] excited for new friends and 'new' hands on classes!"*

*"I would like to be part of High Rocks because it could make me a better person and help me approve [sic] on my life and mistakes"*

*"I want to come to High Rocks to learn how to be a leader, to make friends, and be a part of something good for my community and of course to have fun."*

*"The most exciting part to me is that the camp might help me get over my fear of meeting new people for the first time."*

*"I want to do and try new things."*

*"High Rocks is an opportunity to try new things, experience more, and learn more."*

*"I think of High Rocks as an adventure."*

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## New Beginnings Camp

New Beginnings Camp is the original High Rocks experience.

### New Beginnings

- Introduced a group of **24** rising 8th graders to High Rocks; 22 (92%) completed camp.
- At the end of the 14-day camp, **100%** of campers said camp changed them in positive ways and/or made them a better leader.
- **95%** liked math and/or science better than they did. (Compared to about half last year).
- **71%** said classes at High Rocks taught them more than classes at school.
- **95%** said classes at High Rocks are more fun than at school.
- **100%** of campers reported that what they learned at camp will help them have better relationships with family and friends.
- **100%** felt physically stronger at the end of camp.

### In their own words...

*"I learned who I am, and I am not afraid to be myself."*

*"I have a right to be a teenager." (On what they've learned at camp)*

*"Camp was about connections. About learning. About love. I connected with everyone here and it changed me. I learned so much. How to lead and ride horses, about leaves and solar power, about equations and money, and most of all I learned about myself. I love High Rocks. The people, the place, everything."*

*"My whole mentality has changed. I now look at the positive versus the negative."*

*"Coming to camp has changed my life. It made me realize who I really was inside. I love everyone here."*

*"I can't think of another journey I'd rather be on."*

## Camp Steele

Camp Steele is our camp for older girls, which has different "tracks" for girls to choose in an area of interest. 2012 Courses included: Construction, Media, Song School, Social Movements, and Food Revolution.

Based on evaluations completed by High Rocks girls, Camp Steele 2012:

- **95%** of girls at Camp Steele this year called it a "transformational" experience.
- **90%** described Camp Steele as "academically rigorous."
- **85%** of girls said that they felt their own experiences were honored and drawn on, with constant connections being made between the materials studied and their own lives.
- Overall, a vast majority of the comments seemed to say, "More." More class days, more LOAs, more solo time, etc.

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## Camp Steele In their own words...

*"You learn so much and you get to see a whole new different side to everything you thought you knew."*

*"I learned to be more self-sufficient. I also learned how to find good friends with people I didn't know very well. I'll use [these skills] in my everyday life."*

*"I learned how my heart really felt about certain things. I am really proud of myself for opening my opinion to people."*

*"I increased my writing skills which will help me in school and with job/college applications."*

*"I learned so much more about construction and it was great! I know now about how roofs are constructed, how windows are put in, how to install doors and locks, and lots more."*

*"I have now been empowered and it is my duty to empower others."*

## Junior Counselors

The Junior Counselor experience is our ultimate leadership experience for older girls. During New Beginnings Camp, Junior Counselors attend college-level classes, and work intensively as a team with staff to help run camp, and mentor younger girls

- **8** High Rocks girls were selected as JCs in 2012; 7 completed camp.
- Asked to rate their experience of being JC on a scale from 1 to 10, every girl rated it at least an **8**. Three of the seven rated it 9 or 10.
- **100%** of this year's JCs feel more prepared for college as a result of their JC experience.
- **80%** felt they developed their personal leadership skills as a JC.

## In their own words...

*"I am much more confident in my leadership and authority."*

*"Even though I'm only a sophomore, I feel I can go into next year with better time management skills."*

*"I feel I have better time management skills and knowledge of how to write a college paper."*

*"I feel like I really could lead next year's JCs thanks to my fabulous JC leaders this year."*

## Tutoring/Girls Night

We invite current High Rocks Girls to our Lodge or our Dogwood office every Tuesday throughout the fall semester and monthly in the spring for Tutoring Night. We also provide additional tutoring during exam time.

## In 2011-2012 Tutoring:

- High Rocks offered a total of **17** tutoring sessions throughout the school year.
- **41** young women attended at least one tutoring in the fall, and **16** attended in the spring.
- During this time, participating staff and AmeriCorps members spent **393** hours planning for these sessions, and offered **964** in contact hours of academic and mentoring support.
- 100% of participants evaluated tutoring positively and thought it should be offered again.



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## Tutoring in their words...

*"I came to be with my High Rocks sisters, and it was nice to be in an environment where I can get help with my homework. [Tutors] were very helpful. They showed me ways that I could solve problems that I wouldn't have thought of."*

*"[Tutoring] was fun and productive."*

*"I come because I love this place, it's the only place I can go without being judged and being loved no matter what. [Tutors] helped me...with the tutors here and a computer anything can be done!"*

## Mentoring

We build a positive peer group among High Rocks girls, but also offer lots of one-on-one mentoring and support through phone calls, home visits, or meetings over coffee.

- In addition to the mentoring provided during tutoring, college prep, and art and service programs, **High Rocks also provided over 420 additional contact hours of dedicated individual mentoring to 99 teen girls** last year.

## College Access and Scholarships

We offer help with standardized test preparation, advice on which colleges apply to, support with college applications and essays, and financial aid, as well as organizing college trips and offering scholarships.

In 2011-2012 High Rocks provided:

- **845** contact hours dedicated exclusively to higher education readiness,
- Four multi-day trips to see **15** different colleges, from WV to NYC, as well as a weekend essay-writing workshop, an overnight retreat for students focused on understanding the admissions and financial aid process, and a Parents Night program.
- Of the 2012 High Rocks Seniors, there was a **100% graduation rate**.
- **100%** of active High Rocks seniors were accepted to college and are now currently enrolled.

## College Access in their words...

*Two words to describe High Rocks Senior Parent Night: "amazing, informative," "concise and informative"*

*"[High Rocks college trips] opened me up to some colleges I never would have even thought of visiting or researching."*

*"I now have a plan, a firm plan for college. "*

*"The people who are helping Kacie are doing everything possible to enable Kacie to get into college and make the transition as seamless as possible!"— A High Rocks Mom*

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## Support for Alums in College

While getting to college is a major accomplishment, making it through the first year and beyond can be as much or more of a challenge.

- **100%** of HR alums who started at college in 2011 finished their freshman year in good academic standing and returned for sophomore year.

## Youth Advisory Board

Select High Rocks girls work as “consulting experts” with our board of directors and program staff, completing research projects and advising on the future of the program.



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## Community Programs

We facilitate youth ages 5-19 to participate positively in the world around them. We focus on building their voice, leadership, and values through creative and service-oriented projects. Although High Rocks Girls often serve in leadership roles, these programs are co-ed and intergenerational, actively building young people's skills to work comfortably and effectively in a diverse group. Boys are welcome!

### Community Programs in their words...

*"Actually I wasn't expecting anything that happened and this was just an amazing, life changing experience."*

## Where we work

Through our community-based offices, workshops at schools and libraries, and other opportunities, we work to engage a wide network of adult mentors and build a community culture that supports youth and families. You can find us at our lodge and campground near Hillsboro, at Dogwood Studio in Ronceverte, and at the Steele Studio on Main Street in Richwood.

Many of the youth projects we provide are also thanks the support of strong community partnerships. Examples include: Pocahontas County Family Resource Network, Pocahontas County Sheriff's Department, Pocahontas Times, Carnegie Hall, Family Refuge Center, Child and Youth Advocacy Center, Pocahontas Free Libraries, and Allegheny Mountain Radio.

## Youth Community Action

The High Rocks Youth Community Action Program (YCA) includes trips, conferences and learning exchanges, youth forums, and service learning programs that give young people hands-on leadership experience.

### Trips, Conferences and Learning Exchanges (on the road)

- 2011-2012 YCA Trips included an ACLU Bill of Rights Dinner, the Fairness West Virginia Conference, a School to Prison Pipeline Action Camp in NC, and Women's Day at the Legislature, as well as an "Alternative Spring Break" to South Carolina to participate in a Habitat for Humanity Build.
- **22** HR Girls, Alums, and other youth participants received **1107** contact hours through these trips.

### Habitat Highlights

- The volunteers gave **225** hours of direct service with the Habitat build.
- In evaluations, the 6 girls on the trip named highlights including, "[Learning] that I can do anything I set my mind to," and "I learned how to work with different types of people and I got to learn how to use power tools."
- Not only did the girls represent AmeriCorps and their state proudly, they were the winners of the "You Tube Collegiate Challenge," for the best Habitat for Humanity spring break build video. Participants all received tee-shirts and free lodging for next year's volunteer crew.

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## Trips, Conferences, and Learning Exchanges in their words...

*"I learned a lot about speaking out about what you believe in."*

*"I learned that I can make a difference in the world as a woman."*

*"There were so many conversations [on the Habitat trip to Savannah about gentrification.] When Margaret asked us what this term meant, nobody (except the adults) knew. Then she began explaining it. Everybody had a light bulb moment. We knew this was happening, but we didn't know the term for it."*

## Youth Forum

- The 2012 Pocahontas Youth Forum worked to raise awareness of prescription drug abuse, bringing together law enforcement, local doctors, families in recovery, and other community organizations.
- Students received **67 contact hours** of education and mentoring during work sessions, interviewing community members, producing public service announcements, and learning to use media equipment.
- **100%** of participants say the forum gave them new ideas or got them interested in something new.
- The culminating event of the Youth Forum was a community "Recovery Forum," presented in cooperation with a community-based support group for mothers recovering from addiction. Over **100 community members** attended. The event was supported by **27 community volunteers** who donated **75 hours** of their time.

## The Youth Forum in their words...

*Participant evaluations describe the meetings as "eye-opening," "enlightening," and "life changing"*

*"Students are excited to create positive media that encourages people to live their lives to the fullest without drug addiction, instead of terrifying people and creating a terrible image of drug users."*

*"[The question session with Sherriff David Jones] really opened my eyes to what drug abuse does to people."*

## Service Learning

In 2011-2012:

- High Rocks participants volunteered and presented an original speech annually at the Lewisburg Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration. High Rocks also organized a spring 5K race in Greenbrier County, a Chili and Verse event and free community Arts and Beautification Festival in Richwood, and brought teen volunteers to interview community members at TOOT and help out at the Great Greenbrier River Race.
- Staff and AmeriCorps members dedicated over **1065 contact hours** to working with youth in ensuring that these were a success.
- More than **65** youth participated in 6 service events, interacting with upwards of **1000** community members.

## Service Learning In their words...

*"I learned that no matter what, I have people to back me up and that they can always count on me too."*

*"I learned that you have to take a stand in what you believe in, and do it in a respectful, non-violent way."*

*"[I learned] that people don't care what you do or who you are, they'll accept you with arms wide open."*

*"Doing this made me feel more confident in myself and what I can do."*

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## Arts Education for Youth

High Rocks offers arts education outreach, bringing free and innovative programs to our youth and community.

- This year's Arts Education Events included Song School and Dogwood-based art workshops in Lewisburg and the New Voices Creative Writing workshops in all three counties—providing a total of approximately **330** contact hours of community-based arts programs for **61** youth and community members.

For Song School 101...

- **100%** of students reported increased confidence and interest in something new
- **100%** of students were connected to new friends in a positive peer support group
- **50%** of students actually said it actually changed their lives

**Song School in their words...**

*"I'm not sure it could get any better because it's so good!"*

*"Really amazing"*

*"Superbly productive"*

*"Creativity catalyst"*

*"Amazingly awesome"*

*"Fun, Challenging"*

*"Fan-Freakin-tastic"*

*"Invigorating"*

## Use Your Noodle

Use Your Noodle is a free after-school enrichment program for students in grades 1-5 at Pocahontas libraries.

In 2011-2012 Use Your Noodle:

- Created a six-week World Music fall unit, based on a partnership with the Pocahontas County Opera House. UYN also offered 7 spring after-school enrichment lessons based on an engineering curriculum developed by the Boston Museum of Science.
- Worked with **24** students during the fall session and **33** in the spring session.
- **20%** of kids served in 2011-2012 were first time participants in the UYN program.
- 6 AmeriCorps members and 18 volunteers--including High Rocks girls trained as assistant teachers--were involved in making the after school sessions a success, providing **796 contact hours** altogether.
- **35** Family and Community members attended final presentations at UYN program sites.
- Noodle in the Sun day camp invited 6 High Rocks girls to serve as camp counselors, receiving extensive training and mentoring support as they worked with younger kids as teachers and role models.
- High Rocks staff and AmeriCorps effectively managed 5 parent volunteers and offered **525 additional contact hours** of service to **15** children at the Noodle in the Sun summer day camp.

**Parents evaluated their children's UYN experience and called it...**

*"Fun, educational, hopeful, delightful, stimulating, empowering," and "way cool."*

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## School and Community Partnerships

High Rocks regularly partners with county schools on various projects to enrich school curriculum. Examples include: writing workshops in English classes; science workshops and field trips for science classes to explore High Rocks outdoor classroom; art projects; special after school programs.

Pocahontas County School Partnerships in 2011 included:

- AmeriCorps members also volunteered in 8<sup>th</sup> grade language arts classes in Marlinton, providing workshop lessons on poetry and creative writing to approximately **60 students** while their teacher was out recovering from surgery.
- Members provided nearly **260 contact hours** to middle school students in school through these partnerships.

## The STAY Project

Founded by a group that includes a High Rocks alum and a former intern, Stick Together Appalachian Youth is “a diverse regional network of young people through Central Appalachia who are working together to advocate for and actively participate in their home mountain communities.

High Rocks continued to maintain an active, supportive partnership with STAY in 2011-2012

- High Rocks hosted a steering committee meeting for STAY last fall, as well as its annual Summer Institute, bringing young leaders from around the region to explore our area.
- High Rocks alums and staff attended STAY events, and served in leadership positions on committees.



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## The Teaching Project

High Rocks staff members love working high atop our mountainside, but we also get excited to go out into the world and share what we've learned. Our publications, presentations, and programs are the result of a 16-year learning lab for what works in non-profit administration and youth development.

## AmeriCorps

Since 2010, High Rocks has partnered with Volunteer West Virginia to be one of the largest AmeriCorps service sites in the state.

On AmeriCorps member development at High Rocks...

- **100%** of members reported that they feel more confident in their ability to be a positive part of a group working together to do a project as a result of the training provided
- **90%** felt more confident in their ability to facilitate a group
- **80%** felt more confident in their ability to be a leader in a group, their ability to design a project or plan a lesson, and their skills as a teacher as a result of their training
- **100%** rated themselves as capable or very confident in teaching ability and general leadership skills.

## Summer Internships

Interns' direct experience teaching at camps and mentoring teens is enriched and complemented by a series of seminars that invite interns to explore regional history, development, theory, media and art.

**100% of interns from 2011 said that as a result of their internship experience ...**

- They are better teachers, better leaders, better facilitators, and better communicators.
- They also feel more confident and comfortable working with a diverse group of people.
- They know more about the history and culture of West Virginia, and understand more about the idea of Appalachian identity.
- They have new insight into classes or coursework, and talked about High Rocks in a class or work.
- They are more likely to participate in activism, and feel more motivated to make the world better.
- They have made choices about life, school or career they wouldn't have made otherwise.
- **100%** of 2012 Summer Interns say the internship empowered them with practical strategies for working with young people to build voice, confidence and critical thinking.

In their words (from 2012 Intern evaluations)...

*"I learned more about what it means to be a teacher this summer. As a teacher, I am a role model, not a dictator...there to facilitate their journey."*

*"This has completely changed my perspective on many things including adolescence as a whole, sexuality, privilege, and the list goes on. I feel so fortunate to have learned so much in such a short period of time."*

*"I learned more about how I can find ways to help or rally for change and ways in which I can empower others to do so as well."*

*"I feel confident as a role model and a teacher. I'm inspired by the passion and exuberance that everyone connected to HR shares. Seeing this passion has given me faith in the world. Amazing people do exist in places accessible to me!"*

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## Spring and Fall College Crews

High Rocks is the host to college students during school breaks to work as volunteers with our organization.

- A group of **8** students from Haverford University and Bryn Mawr College spent their 2011 fall break at the High Rocks lodge in Hillsboro.
- The students gave **over 300 service hours**; they worked on group build projects, led a self-esteem workshop and sang camp songs with the girls. They also participated in an overnight with High Rocks girls, where they led a session on college access.

## Conferences, Outreach and Advocacy

We engage and educate people's minds and hearts in conferences, networks, and meetings, and share our ideas and experiences through papers and presentations. We are helping close the "theory-practice-learning" cycle between academic learning and work in the field.

- In 2011-2012, Sarah represented High Rocks at the WV Small Farmers Conference, the Appalachian Funders Network annual meeting, and the Generation West Virginia Conference.

## The Emerging Leaders Network

A collaboration between The Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, TN, Appalshop's Appalachian Media Institute (AMI) in Whitesburg, KY, and High Rocks Educational Corporation in Hillsboro, WV, in partnership with the STAY Project, The Appalachian Emerging Leaders Network (AELN) is an effort to create pathways in the region for emerging leaders. The Appalachian Emerging Leaders Network is working to transform Appalachia into a vibrant region that is sustainable economically, environmentally, and educationally.





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## Local Foods

### Grow Appalachia

Grow Appalachia is an outreach education and service project of Berea College, funded by John Paul DeJoria, co-founder and CEO of John Paul Mitchell Systems, Inc. Grow Appalachia is dedicated to helping mountain families plant a healthy future for themselves and their communities. The program provides participants with skills and resources to grow sustainable and nutritious food, to prepare and preserve food in a healthy way, and to empower them to share their knowledge in the community. High Rocks is one of 15 Grow Appalachia sites across the region

Through the Grow Appalachia Program in 2011-2012:

- High Rocks is working with **13** Pocahontas County families, **4** community gardens, and **2** market gardeners.
- In those families are **51** people. The average family size is 4 and the average age of a participant is 29.
- High Rocks gardens produced over **500lbs** of fresh greens and vegetables for our summer programs!

### Farm2School Pilot Program

The Farm2School pilot in West Virginia has been spearheaded by High Rocks for the past two years. We are partnering with food directors, school cooks, and local farmers to build sustainable food networks. It is our goal to create longstanding nutritional change, to boost local food economies, to provide educational opportunities, and to give kids real food and real food knowledge.

In 2011-2012:

- School-based AmeriCorps members interacted with **519** youth and community members as they did outreach across two counties.
- The AmeriCorps team developed activities in close partnership with the schools and teachers, working toward the goal of both supporting hands-on science education for students and building good nutritional habits that kids would practice and bring back to their families. From composting and apple-tasting to nutritional analysis of their Thanksgiving dinners and creative writing exercises about pears, AmeriCorps brought fun and important lessons into the schools that supported teachers' educational goals while also building awareness and community around local foods.
- AmeriCorps members implement **over 115 classroom activities**, including weekly classroom visits for several grades in Pocahontas County, as well as developing a school garden and a Junior Master Gardener class in Fayette County.
- In the coming year, the program is expanding from 2 sites to 7.

