



Building skills and resilience

April 11, 2017



For one group of local teens, last year's summer job included trail construction and supporting the recovery of an endangered butterfly species.

The teens, many in foster care, were part of the SEEDS Youth Conservation Corps. SEEDS gives at-risk youth training and job experience in environmental stewardship and conservation.

"We're learning to be more ecologically friendly," said Jamie, a youth crew member. "I'm interested in the outdoors and had some basic knowledge already, but now I'm learning more skills to improve what I can do."

"I've learned how to work with others, use my time wisely, and keep calm and not get frustrated," added Jasmine, another crew member.

Locally, SEEDS works with the DHHS Michigan Youth Opportunities Initiative (MYOI), a support network for older youth in foster care. Other partners include Michigan Works! and the U.S. Forest Service. Local programming was funded in part by a grant from the Community Foundation.

"I like seeing how it helps the kids grow," said Sarah Meeuwes, MYOI coordinator. "They're building resiliency and self-esteem. It also gives them independence to have money to meet needs. Many of them have had to fight to get their needs met for so long. This gives them a sense of stability. And even though the work is hard, they really have a sense of accomplishment."