

Marion SEEDS program offering activity boxes during pandemic

Marion SEEDS program offering activity boxes during pandemic

By Rick Charmoli Cadillac News Jul 8, 2020 Updated 4 hrs ago



MARION — It has been nearly four months since Marion Elementary School students have been able to be in a classroom, but one after school program is working at keeping their young minds engaged during the summer.

Traditionally, SEEDS After School hosts an educational day camp at its partner schools like in Marion each summer. This year, students enrolled in the free program have received boxes delivered to their doorsteps, with hours of engaging activities inside. The most recent box was starting to be picked up Monday, according to Marion SEEDS Site Coordinator Erin Guesno.

Each box contains activities that encourage youth to learn outside and about the natural world around them. Examples of activities include water quality testing of local watersheds, planting trees, building sundials, identifying animal tracks, and more.

In this box, Guesno said 56 students signed up for the after school program during the last school at the elementary. She said that is roughly a quarter of the school's population so that is a good portion of the student body at the elementary that were participating.

This particular box Guesno said is a three-week box and there is an activity Monday-Friday. She also said there are some weekend activities included. Although none of it required, the hope is they will find them fun as well as educational.

Participating students also can expect a series of activity boxes this summer, including a box about social-emotional learning and a "Bugs and Butterflies" themed box.

She also said the activity boxes include things to help the students deal with their emotions during the pandemic.

"There also is a socio-emotional component to help reach the kids. We have been calling the kids to see how they are doing," she said. "Some were expressing fear of getting sick or their parents dying."

Marion started a pilot program during the past school year at the elementary and Guesno said it has been a great partnership. The partnership with SEEDS was announced in July 2019.

The funding for the program was announced last summer via the new 21st Century Community Learning Center grants by the Michigan Department of Education. The funds are to be used for daily after-school enrichment activities in partnership with schools in underserved areas.

SEEDS is a 501c3 nonprofit organization formed in 1999 to implement local solutions to global challenges at the intersection of ecology, education, and community design. SEEDS' goal is to foster healthy, vibrant communities filled with clean food, great kids, and helpful neighbors.

SEEDS After School programming began in 2009 and focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics as well as getting students out-of-doors and active. Students at grant sites have access to free programming four days per week and during the summer.

The programming is offered free to families within the district after school for a total of 32 weeks. During the school year, the program is usually offered four days a week, generally Monday-Thursday for an average of three hours per day. Summer programming also is part of the program and is free to families in the district. It too is usually for Monday-Thursday for an average of 4-6 hours a day.