SEEDS in Traverse City Promotes Green Education in Northern Michigan

By EVAN PERRY on August 19, 2014

With crews of enthusiastic teens constructing trails and rebuilding barns in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and programs promoting eco-conscious living for all, Northern Michigan non-profit SEEDS is investing its energy in a greener, cleaner future. MyNorth's Evan Perry spoke with SEEDS' Kaitlyn Burns to learn what makes the organization tick and how Northern Michigan kids can reap what SEEDS has sown.

What is SEEDS? What does it stand for?

SEEDS stands for Seeking Ecology Education and Design Solutions. We're a non-profit that focuses on teaching people skills that will allow them to make better decisions throughout their lives—how to create better habits, how to maintain a healthy diet, and how to develop job skills. A lot of that training happens through green community resilience projects. Our programs are geared toward children and young adults, because they're the ones who are both starting off in life and can benefit the most from learning new skills.

How can young kids get involved with SEEDS?

We have a K-6 after-school programs in Mesick, Brethren and Rapid City. Activities will incorporate lessons on core standards that are taught at the elementary level—math, science and so forth—but also on culinary, nutritional and physical education. Basically, its about getting kids outside instead of indoors, and hands-on instead of in front of the screen.

And what about older kids and teens?

Our Youth Conservation Corps is a made up of 16- to 24-year-olds who can earn school credit while learning green collar job skills. They work on National Park projects like building boardwalks or cleaning up rivers—doing jobs that require skills that aren't really taught in schools and that people that age don't practice. Groups of 5 or 6 will go to a work site with a SEEDS staffer who supervises the group, so the job gets done effectively and the kids learn along the way.