

A Program that Grows with its Participants

Northwoods Stewardship Center – Conservation Corps, East Charleston

Middle School is notorious for being a difficult time of one’s life. Research shows that caring adult mentors, service opportunities, and active group work can all help young teens feel valued as members of the community. For middle school aged kids in the Northeast Kingdom, the Northwoods Stewardship Center’s Conservation Corps helps fill this need.

The Northwoods Conservations Corps began in 1995, and right from the start it aimed to provide middle schoolers in the Northeast Kingdom with job opportunities and support through this time of transition from child to young adult. In the beginning, the corps consisted of just one group of eight kids who did trail maintenance, and since then the program has grown by leaps and bounds. Today the program has expanded to include older students and to include work done in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife in Vermont and surrounding states. In the summer of 2011 there were 12 crews totaling approximately 70 young people.

Despite the geographic expansion of the program, the Conservation Corps remains committed to serving local middle school students, and the program is designed to grow with them. Students aged 14 to 16 from Northeast Kingdom middle and high schools perform trail maintenance, invasive plant projects and wildlife habitat improvements as a part of day crews. Then, as those corps members get older, they can work on crews that spend week-long outings in the backcountry maintaining trails. After working in the backcountry, crew leader positions await corps members as well. Ross Stevens, Conservation Service Corps Director, says that Northwoods created the backcountry crews because they “had lots of great crew members, who hit the age limit and couldn’t work for the corps anymore. We wanted to provide them with opportunities to continue to be a part of the team.”



Ross Stevens

► **Contact information:**

Ross Stevens, Conservation Service Corps Director
Northwoods Stewardship Center
www.northwoodscenter.org/conservationcorps.html
ross@northwoodscenter.org

58

A College Where Book Learning is Only Half the Story

Sterling College – Student Service Requirement, Craftsbury Common

With only 125 students, Sterling College is a small institution of higher education, but don’t let the size of the student body fool you. This is a school with a big impact.

The college’s mission statement explains, “The Sterling College community combines structured academic study with experiential challenges and plain hard work to build responsible problem solvers who become stewards of the environment as they pursue productive lives.” Tim Patterson, Publications Editor and Director of Media Relations at Sterling, boils it down by saying that the college, “tries to teach sustainability not only through theory, but also through practice.” Patterson cites the school’s dining hall as one area of the school where sustainability is put into practice. Approximately 25% of the food consumed in the dining hall is grown by students on the Sterling Farm and Organic Gardens. Other

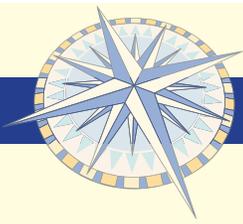
► **Contact information:**

Tim Patterson, Publications Editor and Director of Media Relations
Sterling College
www.sterlingcollege.edu
admissions@sterlingcollege.edu
800-648-3591



14

14



ORLEANS COUNTY



students harvest timber from the school's woodlot for construction and firewood. And some students volunteer to present environmental and gardening lessons each month in local schools, bringing both content knowledge and extra hands into classrooms.

Sterling is New England's only Work-Learning-Service college. The Work-Learning-Service designation means that students work at least 80 hours each semester both to earn money toward their tuition and to contribute to the campus and local communities. Students work as Mount Mansfield Watershed Monitors, as Craftsbury High School Mentors and as members of the school's Maple Sugaring Team, just to name a few of the jobs. According to Sterling's website, the purpose of this program is not just to build student resumes, but to, "simply demonstrate on a daily basis what it takes and what it means to be a productive member of an active community." At Sterling, it clearly isn't about quantity, but quality. While a small number of students graduate each spring, both the coursework and Work-Learning-Service component insure that those students become active and productive members of their future communities.



Photo provided by Sterling College

58



14

The purpose of this program is not just to build student resumes, but to "simply demonstrate on a daily basis what it takes and what it means to be a productive member of an active community."

14