

WIB Name/WSA: **Rural Minnesota Cep, Inc.**

### **Overview**

Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc.(RMCEP), received ARRA funding in August, 2009, to supplement wages for youth to work with the US Forest Service at Camp Rabideau, located in Blackduck, Minnesota, to help with restoration of buildings at the site. Rabideau Conservation Academy and Learning Center, Inc. is a former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. The CCC is listed today as a national landmark; the best preserved CCC camp in the U.S. The Rabideau Conservation Corps project (RCC) was coordinated with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Cass Lake/Bena School District, the US Forest Service and RMCEP. Work projects for the youth would be provided by the US Forest Service.

A WIA youth program project was previously tested during the summer of 2008 using RMCEP WIA summer youth funds to run a six week project at Camp Rabideau to start the initial clean up; landscaping and building renovation needed at the camp. In the summer of 2009, RMCEP again used WIA summer funds to assist the Forest Service staff at Camp Rabideau to survey and transplant Lady Slipper flowers along a portion of highway being upgraded. They also began a garden production project and were provided instruction and technical assistance by the U of M Extension Office. The plan was to continue these projects into a year round program at Camp Rabideau.

The youth who were recruited for the ARRA RCC project were at risk youth who were WIA eligible and had some form of offender status or attachment to the juvenile justice system. RMCEP provided a World of Work orientation to the youth who were selected for the project. RMCEP also provided supervisor orientations for Forest Service and ALC staff that would lead and monitor the project. RMCEP and the Cass Lake ALC recruited youth for the program.

### **Jobseeker and Community impact**

A total of 21 youth were enrolled in the project. The following are some of the statistics of the group:

- 50% were Native American youth.
- All attended the Cass Lake ALC working on a GED or Diploma. All were at risk and offender status.
- All youth received minimum wage for the time they worked.
- Four youth were promoted to Lead Workers, received a promotion in wage, and were then assigned as mentors to other youth working at Rabideau.
- All youth set up at least one work readiness goal to complete a world of work orientation on worksite safety, timecard preparation, child labor laws, positive work habits, right to know, punctuality, and worksite expectations.
- All 21 youth completed the work readiness goal.
- 13 youth also set and completed a career readiness/career assessment goal.
- All 21 youth working on the Rabideau project were assigned to a social worker hired through the Cass Lake/Bena School District Byrnes JAG grant. The social worker counseled the youth with family, probation and attendance issues. All 21 youth received career exploration in Forest Service careers and conservation through their temporary work at Rabideau.
- 21 youth received career assessment and career planning assistance through the Leech Lake Youth Advisor project contracted with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Rural MN CEP, Inc., provided a career advisor three days/week to assist the youth with career assessments, career information, research on careers with emphasis on forestry service or conservation, assistance with FAFSA, exposure to Workforce Center services, demand occupations, individual career

counseling, development of career portfolios, and job seeking assistance. Those 21 youth began a career portfolio of career interests.

- 18 youth were introduced to post secondary concepts, education, training and financial aid.
- 5 youth received help with FAFSA application preparation.
- 21 youth were introduced to concepts of labor market information and demand occupations using MCIS and ISEEK.
- 4 youth were provided instruction on the Job Search process, job applications and resume writing.
- 4 youth attended career fairs in the area.
- All youth received tours of Itasca Community college, Northwest Technical College, Northland Community and Technical College, Leech Lake Tribal College, and they attended a Leech Lake Career Fair. These trips were provided by the Cass Lake ALC.

### **Identification of those involved**

The Rabideau Conservation Corps project (RCC) was coordinated with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Cass Lake/Bena School District, the US Forest Service and RMCEP.

### **Leveraging/alignment of outside resources**

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### **Ideas for replication/lessons learned**

The data continues to indicate that the Social Worker component of the project is a key component to cohort members sticking with the project. The ability of the Social Worker to link students with needed services is proving to remove barriers which very likely would have caused cohort members to drop out of the service.

When polled, the student input overwhelmingly showed that the best parts of the project were the practical application skills and the hands on learning that were part of the project.