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## Missouri Youth Gain Hands-On Experience in Sustainable Ag

**Project Title:** Engaging Youth in Sustainable Agriculture through Hands-on Experience

**Coordinator:** Amelia LaMair

**Location:** Tecumseh, MO

**SARE Grant:** \$1,992

**Duration:** 2015-2017

To read the full project report, go to <http://mysare.sare.org> and search for project number YENC15-088.



*Amelia LaMair received an NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant to teach students from Lutie School District about sustainable agriculture in Theodosia, Missouri. Photo by Eric Tumminia.*

NCR-SARE recognizes that youth programs are a way to introduce new and exciting farming and ranching options to youth, parents, and community members. The Lutie School District in Theodosia, Missouri shares this perspective, where 4th graders measure plant growth in raised beds, kindergarteners have their own “kindergarden,” and middle school and high school agriculture classes take field trips to nearby sustainable farms.

In 2015, Amelia LaMair was working for a nonprofit organization called One Garden as an Americorps VISTA worker. One of her goals as a volunteer was to work with local schools to promote gardening and local foods. With support from One Garden board members,

the Lutie School superintendent, and a couple of teachers, LaMair applied for and received an NCR-SARE Youth Educator \$1,992 grant to help Lutie High School students learn about sustainable agriculture through a farm tour and through hands-on experience in their school garden.

During the grant project, ten students had the opportunity to visit Jeff and Rachel Barry’s 17-acre sustainable farm, Stella Luna Farm, which introduced them to practices including no-till vegetable production, cover crops, water conservation, high tunnel management, solar energy, and rotational grazing. After the tour, students gained hands-on experience inoculating white oak logs with shiitake mushroom spawn, making cider from locally grown apples, planting cover crops, harvesting and preparing produce, making salad dressing, and cooking for lunch.

In addition to the farm tour, LaMair’s project activities included teaching sustainable agriculture concepts and working with students as they planted crops in the school’s newly donated raised beds. She facilitated a classroom presentation by April Wilson, a local NRCS representative who gave a talk about careers in agriculture and the changing demographics of today’s farms. LaMair also helped each high school student research a crop he/she was interested in growing; students developed information pages that included the scientific plant name, planting instructions, harvesting information, and how to prepare the crop for eating.

“The students have been very responsive to this project,” said LaMair. “They are now able to articulate how sustainable agriculture can benefit them, their community, and the world, and are also aware of the local and global challenges associated with food production. I think the tour of Stella Luna Farm has had the greatest impact. They really enjoyed interacting with young farmers and observing their way of life first hand. One parent reported that the day after the tour her son declared he was going to become a farmer!”

In pursuance of her goal to educate youth about sustainability, LaMair was recently awarded a second NCR-SARE Youth Educator grant to teach students more about sustainable forestry through a field trip to the Alford Forest, a 3,200 acre forest in the Missouri Ozarks.

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