

Grant/Adams Area 4-H Program Makes a Difference in the Community

Submitted by Diane Russo, WSU Extension

The Grant/Adams Area 4-H program received a grant from ESRI which included GIS software and licensing to assist in adding our state and county for emergency preparedness. The Grant County Fairgrounds has been deemed the statewide emergency relief zone for a catastrophic event as it is centrally located and has excellent air and ground transportation possibilities.

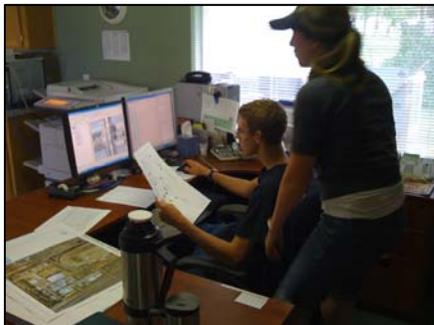
Our goal for the GPS/GIS Day was to learn about GPS by geocaching and collecting waypoints at the fairgrounds, which would then be transferred to the GIS software for mapping all of the sites on the fairgrounds for future emergency preparedness.

Our GPS/GIS Day was posted on the national ESRI site, which spurred interest to an international group called GISCorps, who contacted me with the intent to send volunteers to help us. It was wonderful as we did get four volunteer from GISCorps.

(GISCorps (www.giscorps.org) coordinates short-term, volunteer GIS services to communities worldwide. Begun in 2003 with a primary focus on humanitarian efforts, GISCorps has expanded its projects to include local educational support. These educational efforts are seen as an integral part of its mission to improve the quality of life on our planet. GISCorps services support humanitarian relief, community development, local capacity building, health and education. Since its inception in October of 2003, the Corps has attracted hundreds of volunteers from over 67 countries. To date, GISCorps has deployed over 137 volunteers to 51 missions. These volunteers have contributed over 7,100 working hours in emergency and non-emergency response missions including several K-12 projects in the United States, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa.

Collaborating on the project was Diane Russo, WSU Extension 4-H Youth Development, Megan Smith, Grant County GIS Coordinator, Mike Shannon and Sam Lorenz, Grant County Emergency Management Preparedness, Jennifer Merrill, 4-H Leader, Carey Roos, Operation Military Kids and the GISCorps Team (Beth Carpenter, Kelly Stancel, Crystal Murphy, J.J. Bach).

The morning began with geocaching fun practicing on the GPS units. Youth and adults gathered around to learn as this was new technology for most of them. Each team was sent out to find the treasures and return for a prize. The youth were great learners as well as teacher. Soon they were teaching their parents who later helped collect waypoints for mapping.



Older youth joined in the GISCorps team to work on preparing the basics for the mapping project. A small group of older youth joined Carey Roos with a video production of the day exhibiting yet another form of technology.



Jennifer Merrill, 4-H Leader, conducted a lesson using laptops and ArcView (GIS Program) while newly trained parents collected waypoints for data entry. These waypoints were then entered into the system allowing a map to be generated of the Grant County Fairgrounds.

Due to the efforts of the day, Grant County now has a modern technological map of the Grant County Fairgrounds for emergency preparedness, and those attending increased their technological background.



The inclusion of GIS at the club level helped prepare the youth in Grant/Adams Area for higher education and employment in the fields of science and engineering. With valuable skills learned through the 4-H program, youth discovered new interest and professional goals. They also learned the value of serving others through community service with the Grant County Emergency Management team.



A pre and post evaluation was conducted at the GPS/GPS Day revealing positive gains from both youth and adults.

