

Youth Ecology Corps gardens at Guerneville School

by Frank Robertson Sonoma West Staff Writer news@sonomawest.com | Posted: Wednesday, August 10, 2016 2:49 pm

A Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps crew dug ditches, installed water pipes and built planter beds in the Guerneville School garden last week thanks to a \$1,500 grant from the Sebastopol Rotary Club.

“It was a large job,” said Richelle Stoufer, the Guerneville School Garden facilitator who lined up the Youth Ecology Corps workers through West County Community Services, the Guerneville-based nonprofit.

“I signed up for a week” for a Youth Corps work crew’s help, said Stoufer, who was directing the garden improvement effort last week alongside Youth Ecology Corps crew coordinator Alex Templeton.

The school garden project, now in its 12th year, offers Guerneville School students an educational opportunity to study everything from life cycles to math and science while “getting their hands in the dirt,” said Stoufer.

The school garden is now providing fresh fruits and vegetables for the school cafeteria, which puts the harvest of the month on the school’s cafeteria menu.

The five youth ecology corpsmen on the job last week were also learning job skills and earning money for their work installing plumbing and building 10 garden beds.

There are 80 Youth Ecology Corps crews working in Sonoma County, earning money while working outside learning about the environment and acquiring job skills, said Templeton.

The Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps program employs youth people from ages 16 to 24 who typically work in the summer four days a week, six hours a day at project hosts sites.

They make at least minimum wage, learn interview and resume’-writing and supply physical labor. “We give them the means to be employable,” said Templeton.

Guerneville’s True Value Hardware Store also donated support and materials for the garden effort.



Garden Party

Pictured (from left to right) are Guerneville School garden coordinator Richelle Stoufer, Youth Ecology Corps crewmembers Francisco Vigil, Adam Skyler Turner, Vernon Swart, Maderick Sampas and Timothy Jones, and Youth Ecology Corps crew co-coordinator Alex Templeton from the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps. The group labored outdoors in the Guerneville School garden last week installing irrigation pipe and building raised planter beds.