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News & Policy

GetConnected 2022 - It's a Wrap!



Photo courtesy of Debra S. Kaplan

Third time's a charm. After the pandemic interrupted our last two attempts, approximately 450 Nebraska afterschool educators and advocates gathered at Omaha's CHI Health Center on February 25th for our first in person event since 2019.

It was worth the wait. The 325 in person and 125 virtual *GetConnected 2022* attendees enjoyed a full day of workshops, walk-n-talk networking opportunities, brainstorming sessions and the kick off of our 2022 statewide book club, featuring Dr. Brene Brown's bestseller, *The Power of Imperfection*.

During a lunch ceremony the *GetConnected 2022* co-sponsors the Nebraska Department of Education and NDE's 21st Century Community Learning Center program and Nebraska Extension / Click2SciencePD and Beyond School Bells presented the 2022 Regent Emeritus Bob Whitehouse Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) Policy Champion Award to Child Care Fund Administrator Nicole Vint, on behalf of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, in recognition of the Department's unprecedented support Nebraska's school age care and learning field during the pandemic.

Our lunch ceremony also saw the launch a new award - the Nebraska ELO Innovator Award, and we recognized two stellar program's - Norfolk's Aftershock Afterschool program and Rabble Mill / The Bay – with this award in recognition of their innovative responses to the challenges the pandemic threw at us and how through these adaptations these programs came out better prepared to grow, and serve more youth with high quality programming, in the years ahead.

Finally, *GetConnected 2022* served as a jumping off point for planning for **Best Summer Ever!**, a 2022 campaign to develop community-lead strategies to provide all Nebraska youth with summer learning experiences that will stick in their memories forever.

But *GetConnected 2022* won't be the last time this group of engaged leaders meets this year. We are already looking forward to bringing Nebraska's youth development professionals back together in September 16th at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Kearny for our Fall conference. We will keep you posted as planning for that exciting conference gets underway.

Power of Us Workforce Survey: Calling All Youth-Serving Professionals and Volunteers



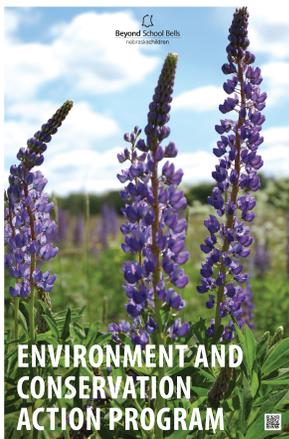
Nebraska's youth live, learn, work, and play in diverse community and school-based out of school time programs in communities across our state. Parents and community leaders know, perhaps more than ever before, that people who work in these settings play an integral role in supporting youth and giving them diverse opportunities to grow and thrive. Yet, there is little collective information about this essential workforce.

In 2022, youth-serving professionals and volunteers—from before, afterschool and summer program staff, to volunteer mentors, to librarians, to Parks and Rec staff, to athletic coaches

and beyond—have the opportunity to share their professional experiences and pathways in their field.

Through the ***Power of Us Workforce Survey***, youth-serving professionals and volunteers can contribute to a national effort to explore, define, and elevate our profession. In addition, this information will be collected in a way allowing us to get a better understanding of what the youth serving field looks like here in Nebraska and will help inform policy, practice, and further research. Please share take the survey and share with other youth development professionals and volunteers in your community! www.powerofussurvey.org

2021 E-CAP Recap



Beyond School Bells is happy to report a successful first year full of growth and new opportunities through our Environmental-Conservation Action Program (E-CAP). E-CAP was launched in early 2021 as an opportunity to highlight and focus our efforts on serving Nebraska's youth through outdoor and environmental education. We kicked off the spring with our annual Tree-a-thon which distributed over 40 saplings across the state and supported various Earth Day celebrations. Our summer included 15 projects ranging from gardens to renewable energy and so much more. A pillar of E-CAP work was Food Systems which included the [Freight Farms](#), [The Greenery](#) shipping container farm bringing new energy and innovative programming and sending fresh greens to the Lincoln Food Bank, LPS sites and community members.

BSB also took part in the international [Food Systems Game Changers Lab](#) where we continue to collaborate with food systems education experts. In the fall we kicked off our Grow Nebraska project to re-localize food systems within our state, beginning with connecting students to their own gardens and local food systems opportunities. E-CAP has woven environmental and conservation themes throughout our support to Afterschool programs in topics like STEM, Entrepreneurship, and College and Career Readiness. 2021 was an incredible year for E-CAP and we promise to continue to grow our roots and offer new branches of programming, connections, resources, and opportunities in this important work in 2022!

Resources & Opportunities

4-H STEM CARES Opportunity

Is your rural* elementary school looking for **near-peer-led STEM programming** this spring or summer? Do you know **high school students** who would benefit from **leading STEM activities** with elementary school students while **gaining experience and getting paid**? [Check out the 4-H STEM CARES initiative!](#)

In this program, a Nebraska Extension 4-H Youth Development STEM Specialist will lead college students in mentoring local high school students in STEM program facilitation. Those high school students will then get paid to facilitate STEM programming to upper elementary

school students in their community. Its a win - win - win ... win! 4-H is looking for students to facilitate a minimum of six (6) hours of STEM programming to childcare programs serving rural* school-age children in Grades 3-5** on any of the following curriculum options:

1. The Power of the Wind
2. Garden Engineering
3. Mechanical Engineering

These are **free** STEM programs for elementary youth and **paid**, career-building opportunities for older youth.

A Teen Program Instructor who facilitated clubs last summer said:



"I loved working with the kids and seeing their progress over the couple of times we met. They were all intelligent and analytical in their own ways! I also loved learning new things myself, and I loved how I had to adapt to different children and their needs."

For more information, to sign up for STEM CARES, or if you know of high-school youth interested in a paid position to lead STEM activities, please go to <https://4h.unl.edu/stem-cares> or email Becky Swanson at rebecca.swanson@unl.edu.

*Any program outside a 10-mile radius of Omaha or Lincoln metro areas qualifies.

**We have some flexibility on the grade levels. Please reach out to us to discuss!

Million Girls Moonshot (MGM) Resources

IF/THEN Collection



The IF/THEN Initiative, a national effort sponsored by Lyda Hill Philanthropies and an MGM partner has a collection of over 100 career path stories of interesting, innovative, female STEM professionals. Check out Adele Luta's [story](#), a Physicist and Innovator who has worked for NASA, NATO, and Oceaneering International to name a few! Stay on the site and check out Adele's [bio](#), or other women's stories of their professional [journeys](#) in STEM.

Camp GoldieBlox



Programs can pair IF/THEN stories with free MGM-partner-created activities that are relevant to specific IF/THEN female role model career paths. After being inspired by Adele's story that includes training NASA astronauts and helping to build the international space station, providers can have their students engage in hands-on learning with [this](#) Camp GoldieBlox activity sheet where students make model satellites.

JFF Possible Futures



If you are further interested in helping your students chart STEM career pathways and prepare them for college and beyond, contact Lauren at Beyond School Bells (lmott@nebraskachildren.org) about our participation in the Jobs for the Future (JFF) MGM Booster Pack. **JFF's Possible Futures**, a customizable career exploration program aimed at grades 6 through 10, helps prepare young people to make meaningful decisions about their future careers and develop skills to help them achieve their goals. BSB will be looking for sites to partner with over the summer and fall 2022 to pilot this innovative curriculum.

TMC Spotlight

TMC Trailer Aids in Disaster Relief!



Hurricane Ida made landfall as a category 4 storm in southeast Louisiana on August 29, 2021. Many schools in Ida's path were severely damaged and remained closed for several weeks as a result, especially those in the southernmost regions of the state, like Lafourche parish. Northshore STEM's TMC mobile lab the [Brain Food Truck](#), which is based out of Tangipahoa parish, provided STEM education activities and supplies for two elementary schools in Lafourche parish in the wake of Hurricane Ida to aid learning loss recovery for

students in this disrupted school year.

The multi-parish collaboration is a testament to both the physical reach that the TMC mobile lab model allows organizations to achieve, and the collaboration facilitated by the recently created Louisiana Regional STEM (LaSTEM) Network centers. ([More about the Regional LaSTEM Network centers](#)). Regional LaSTEM Center Directors are encouraged to share information, collaborate, and interconnect through coordination of resources. In the wake of Hurricane Ida, Region 9 LaSTEM Center Director and Northshore STEM leader Wendy Conarro was quick to offer aid to her counterparts in the hardest hit parts of the state via the Brain Food Truck's hands-on, minds-on STEM activities. Region 3 LaSTEM Center Director Christie Landry saw the opportunity to support her region's STEM education needs and answered the call.

The collaborative efforts of these two STEM education leaders created a unique opportunity to recoup STEM learning losses in a way that allowed students in need to use their creativity, be hands-on, and have fun while learning – things that, while not necessarily conventional disaster relief, certainly helped get things one step closer to normal for Lafourche parish students in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida.

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