

MAKING WAVES AT DCS



DHS Seniors Dedicated to Preserving our Local Waterways

This past summer, DHS seniors Allie Kangas and Malia Yalisove embarked on a clean-up project of the local portion of the Huron River that went far beyond simply picking trash out of the water. Utilizing funds granted by MiCorps, and engaging local business connections, these young women recruited a group of fellow students for a series of successful clean-up days to improve the river's habitat and ecosystem.



Kangas and Yalisove are members of the DHS Ocean Bowl team, and were named captains at the end of the last school year. In preparation for competition, the team learns about the importance of marine life and environmental science. Last spring, these long-time friends were looking for a project that would impact a local body of water when they learned that grant funding for river clean-up was available from MiCorps. Kangas's mom, Jennifer Kangas serves as Operations Director for the Huron River Watershed Council, and she pointed the intrepid volunteers to MiCorps as a possible funding source for their endeavor.

MiCorps is "a network of volunteer water quality monitoring programs in Michigan, created to assist the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) in collecting and sharing water quality data for use in water resources management and protection programs," (from the MiCorps website). The MiCorps Volunteer Stream Cleanup Program (VSCP) "provides grants to local governments to enable them to host stream cleanups of human trash (like tires, plastics, and other human caused rubbish.) The grants pay for equipment, trash pickup, and volunteer appreciation items like food and t-shirts." Up to \$25,000 is available each year for these grants.

The only snag was that the deadline to apply was only two weeks away, and though spring is a very busy time for students with exams and end-of-year projects, Kangas and Yalisove were inspired to apply. As the application required a fiduciary, they partnered with the City of Dexter and Community Development Manager Michelle Aniol. Together they created a detailed budget with specifics about the project including number of workers, supply needs, and sources for matching donations. They said the financial piece was the most difficult part of the application, but their persistence paid off

when the grant was approved for a little over \$900. With matching donations totaling \$1,255 from local businesses, organizations, and individual donors in the forms of material goods and labor, they realized a match donation percentage of 128%.



Then came the actual work. Their first clean-up day on July 6, 2022 was a big success with several excited student volunteers showing up to participate. In addition to the usual trash seen in a river (plastic cups, metal cans, plastic bags, etc.), volunteers also found larger items such as a massive birdhouse and pieces of a child’s playset. Following their hours in the water, the students walked over to the Dexter Creamery where owner Chris Jones treated the group to free frozen yogurt.

“On the first day...we weren’t sure how people were going to respond to us,” Kangas said in a video created for the project. “We are two peers leading other peers, and sometimes that doesn’t go over too well. But, on the day, people were very excited to help us clean up, and help to support our community, and sustain clean, natural ecosystems.

“It was exciting to see students so excited about cleaning our rivers, and doing something good for our community,” she said.



They hope to resubmit their application to hold more cleanup days in the future, making it available to more people and passing the project down to younger DHS students after they graduate.

“We are really thankful for this experience and encourage other students who are interested not to be intimidated by things that seem daunting if they care about them,” the duo shares. “If you are truly passionate about a project or experience, you will find a way to do it!”

A video wrap-up of the project thus far can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeD2D4t74NU>.