



August 24, 2020

The Calhoun County YMCA would like to say a huge thank you to all involved in our first ever Environmental STEM Summer Program! This program was a great success. The COVID pandemic cause things to be rearranged slightly but the Y was still able to involve about 70 students, on average, in a variety of activities teaching them about the local ecosystem.

This environmental program was available to local children ages 3-12. Per the Y's mission, this program was open to everyone including low-income families through the "Y For All" scholarship program and the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust, in the months listed we were able to provide the following number of scholarships; May(16), June(20), July(30) and August(21). We also provided free transportation for field trips along with free meals and snacks throughout the day.

Beach erosion and pollution have limited recreational opportunity to the children of Calhoun County. The Y was proud to present this program focused on education about how to be a good steward of the local ecosystems. We all enjoyed outdoor education and recreational activities. Our students and staff took many exciting field trips such as; to LCRA in Matagorda, 50 students over a 2 day period Learned about beach ecosystem, organisms that live in the local waters, the nesting of the sea turtles, and went on a treasure hunt for plastic pollution and nurdles, fished for local fish and learned the species. LNRA in Edna, 65 students over a 3 day period explored the nature trails and learned about the reptiles, fish and plants that inhabit the lake area. Lake Texana in Edna, 22 students learned about reptiles native to Calhoun and Jackson counties, walking tour of the lake shoreline by Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Agent. Boggy in Port O'Connor, 44 students over a 2 day period learned about the species that live in the marshlands there. Lighthouse Beach in Port Lavaca, 72 students split in groups throughout the day had a touch pool learning on crabs, hermit crabs and oysters, then has a session on seining in which they learned about the different fish and shrimp species. Indianola Beach in Indianola, 20 students learned to kayak and put their water safety skills they learned on a previous field trip to our local pool to use. Coletto Creek Reservoir in Coletto, 22 students learned about aquatic invertebrates, the water cycle, erosion in rivers and formation of deltas in bays and estuaries, Guadalupe river basin from headwaters to San Antonio Bay, water conservation, and how germs spread from person to person. The Floating classroom at Harbor Refuge, 70 students split in 3 groups learned about plankton, marine organism species, how to use a shrimp trawl net and how it works, along with learning how to tell the sex of a sting ray. Students were also able to learn about fish printing, Terrariums, animal tracts of birds and mammals, and the process of rock erosion. Along with many more in house and outdoor activities.

Our program participants had great reactions to the summer activities. Students and their parents have shared their appreciation with Y staff throughout the summer. Our kids are now able to go into the school year with more knowledge about their studies thanks to this environmental program we were able to offer.

The Calhoun County YMCA along with the Calhoun County Extension office and Sea Grant were only able to provide this extensive program for our community through the Matagorda Bay Mitigation Trust Fund. We are looking forward to next summer as we hope to continue this successful program and watch our students learn, grow and thrive in these unique educational experiences. Great appreciation to all involved!