

# UWEX AmeriCorps VISTA Success Story

## Iron County

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The Summer Vistas' focus was on Positive Youth Development in Iron County. This was accomplished through several programs including TrailBlazers, Iron County Summer Youth Camp, and Summer Day Camp.

TrailBlazers was a biking and hiking program that Adrienne and Anna planned and lead as Summer Vistas. There were two locations for the program, Hurley and Mercer. In Hurley they started at the school and Mercer, the public library. From those two locations they continued to local destinations in Iron County. These destinations included hiking trails, waterfalls, lakes, parks, and rivers. Some specific places visited were Lake of the Falls, Weber Lake, Gile Flowage, and Shay's Dam. Once they arrived they hiked, played games, and the Vistas taught lessons. These encouraged kids to live active lives, eat healthy, and to learn more about Iron County's outdoor opportunities.

One of the lessons was on invasive species in Iron County. At a later event for TrailBlazers, one of the members told Anna and Adrienne about how he took the initiative to find out more about invasive species. He described some of the different invasive species he learned about, like the earth worm.

A highlight of the TrailBlazers program was an overnight camping trip. The destination was a local campground in Sayner with paved bike trails that ran through it. Going to the paved trails was a good opportunity for the kids to experience different

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types of biking trails. During the overnight trip the TrailBlazers went biking to a local park, swimming, cooked their own dinners, and had a lesson on survival skills. The survival skill activity helped the kids to think critically about what they need to survive.

Iron County Summer Youth Camp was another program that the Summer Vistas helped with. They were at the camp from Monday until Friday. During this time they served as camp staff helping with campfire, evening activities, astronomy, kitchen duties, and wherever else help was needed.

The camp evening activity led by the Summer Vistas focused on team work and cabin bonding. Cabins became closer after these activities. The cabins becoming closer was important since it was the first night of camp. One example of the cabins working together was during the shrinking iceberg activity. The teams had to communicate effectively and make sure that everyone knew the strategy, otherwise they would not succeed.

Adrienne was also a certified lifeguard at the camp. She instructed kids how to canoe, many of whom had never been in a canoe before. Since canoeing is a hard skill to learn, many of the kids were frustrated at first. By the end of camp though, the majority of the kids could paddle around the lake. They now have a skill that they can use to stay active and healthy, in the lakes and rivers out their back door or around the world.

The last program the Summer Vistas assisted was the Summer Day Camp. They worked with the 4-H Youth Development Summer Assistant, Nicole, to provide a fun, and educational environment for the kids to spend their day. Anna and Adrienne supported the program by teaching the kids games like frogger, pterodactyl, link tag, and setting up a critical thinking obstacle course.

Another educational experience the Summer Vistas provided was a lesson on bike safety. They had a good discussion about why it is important to wear a helmet. One of the kids shared their experience about crashing while wearing a helmet, and coming away fine because he was wearing it. They also set up a course using cones to teach kids bike signals. The kids really enjoyed the course and kept asking to do it over and over

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again. Because many of the kids had not learned the signals before, it will be important to continue this lesson through future day camps to help build up biking programs and teach safety.

All of these programs helped the Summer Vistas to foster healthy, educated, and active youth in Iron County. Through TrailBlazers, Iron County Summer Youth Camp, and Summer Day Camp they were able to reach 112 youth between grades K-8. Whether they were playing games, teaching lessons, or being active, their outreach has lasting effects toward the betterment of Iron County.

