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## UWEX AmeriCorps\*VISTA Success Story

By Randall Boen, VISTA Member

### Recycling Project at Jackson County Fair

#### **Situation:**

At the Jackson County Fair each year the 4-H is responsible for collecting the recyclable materials during the fair. If the 4-H community didn't manage this process, all recyclable material would be discarded along with the regular garbage. This is the third year of Jackson County 4-H's Recycling Project. In previous years the recycling project relied on other forms of transport for the collected recyclables at the Jackson County Fair. Volunteers would typically rely on gators and tractors for transporting the recyclables. Although the methods used to transport recyclables served their purpose, this arrangement was not always consistent.

**Response:** In preparation of this year's fair, my father and I built two bicycle powered carts to transport all the recyclables throughout the fair grounds. These carts were built as light weight as possible while being small enough to maneuver in a fair environment. Youth from the local Boys and Girls Club painted the sides of the cart with stencils of 4-H and recycling related symbols.

The two bicycles were donated by various community members. The Jackson County Agricultural Society agreed to sponsor \$130 cost for additional materials. The Jackson County 4-H community was not responsible for any upfront cost so all of the revenue from the project can be used to support the program into the future.

In use at the fair, these carts served two purposes: first, they served as a dependable mode of transport for volunteers to transfer recyclables across the fair grounds. And secondly, they acted as a visual representation of sustainability to the general fair goers.

For volunteer recruitment and management, I contacted many 4-H families and established a schedule of shifts for families to sign up. We held an orientation to inform families of how to use the new carts and how the new route system worked. For this fair we made a map showing two routes that each volunteer could take to complete their shift.

**Results & Evaluation:** For this project, twenty three adults and twenty two youth volunteered for eleven different shifts during the fair and a cleanup date following the fair. All told volunteers committed approximately eighty-five hours towards this project. Their efforts resulted in the collection of over 300 pounds of aluminum cans and a dumpster full of plastic bottles, glass, cardboard and tin. This value of cans (\$115, which will be used to purchase project materials for future events) collected is significantly greater than in previous years.

Results from a volunteer survey showed an overall positive response to the process. One volunteer remarked that "[the] Recycling this year went very smooth. Amount collected was impressive." One

potential barrier was the maneuvering of the carts through the fair, “Make it easier to ride the bike, we had to push it. It was too heavy” one volunteer said on the post survey. Due to being designed and built for this fair, the carts may need some slight adjustments and modifications to insure they are convenient for their use.