

COCEEC Mini-Grant Request FALL 2008

Name of Group:

Ravenwood Natural Science Center

Contact Information:

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Amount Requested (cannot exceed \$750): \$750

Would you be able to accept partial funding? Yes

1. Describe the program or project for which this funding would be used and how it promotes understanding and/or conservation within the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem:

Ravenwood's mission is to connect children with nature, community and self. We provide both an intuitive awareness and an intellectual understanding of nature for area youth while building outdoor skills and self-confidence through hands-on, inquiry-based education in a safe, supportive environment. Ravenwood combines ancient and modern ecological wisdom to empower youth to become stewards, mentors and leaders in our community.

This year we are expanding our offerings into the winter season by creating a new program called *Teen Winter Camp*. Our incentive is to accommodate less fortunate teens unlikely to get outdoors and actively engage in an authentic winter experience. The program design gives priority to underprivileged youth by offering affordable and accessible winter outdoor opportunities to foster critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, curiosity and a concern with ethical issues through recreation and team building initiatives. Participants will have exposure to wilderness survival, primitive skills, bush-craft, fire cooking, and winter travel while gaining insight into the area's natural history and winter ecosystems. Immersed in a variety of core routines and new winter challenges students will participate in discovery-oriented adventures that strengthen self-confidence and celebrate personal achievements. Snowshoeing, shelter building, camping, tracking, wilderness first aid and stone age tool-building are just a few of the many activities serving as a vehicle for success. *Teen Winter Camp* will encourage lifelong attitudes that foster conservation, recreation, community spirit and awareness of our connections to the natural world.

An award of \$750 from COCEEC will allow us to purchase at minimum four pairs of snowshoes, four backcountry snow shovels and a pull sled. Your generous support will give us a great start on accumulating some basic equipment for this coming winter season.

2. What is the timeline for this project?

Finalize site location with easy access Fall '08.
Finalize program format and activities Fall/Winter '08.
Procure equipment funding and purchase by January '09.
Promote/market camp to area youth.
Conduct first camp February 21st and 22nd in 2009.
Evaluate tangible outcomes and feedback.

3. Describe how other COCEEC participant groups and individuals would benefit from helping to fund this request:

Teen Winter Camp will benefit local teens between the ages of 13 and 16 by giving them mentors for outdoor experiences. Empowered with new ideals, skills and connections to the winter landscape, area youth will become valuable mentors to their peers. Once we open young people to this kind of winter learning experience, they are likely to seek out other opportunities for further learning, service and recreation in the outdoors, thus benefiting other COCEEC partners.

As a yearly event, the program design will grow to include several sessions as demand increases overtime. In the coming years we hope to expand our winter season programs to serve a more diverse population of area youth working with the local schools. In our ongoing effort to build strong local partnerships, we maintain an open door policy and willing share our program ideas, methods and equipment to assist partner organizations.

4. To the degree applicable, describe how this project involves or encourages collaboration between different groups and/or individuals (agencies, schools, teachers, scientists?):

We have initiated dialog with Big Brothers and Sisters of Flathead County and The Boys and Girls Clubs of Glacier Country to collaborate as supporters and facilitators in connecting us with local adults and youth that might like to be involved. We have connected with local school counselors seeking recommendations for qualifying students.

Ravenwood currently conducts other programs that directly coordinate with area schools complimenting existing curriculums. *Teen Winter Camp* is also geared to enrich the local school's curriculum and correlate to the standards and performance indicators currently established. An inspiring outdoor experience may open doors for future jobs/careers that include field science.

We actively seek opportunities to connect with local agencies to gather and provide data pertaining to beneficial research and current community projects whenever applicable, giving our programs added meaning and purpose to make an effectual difference in our community.

5. If applicable, please describe any other sources and amounts of funding for this project:

Ravenwood will solicit matching in-kind donations and/or wholesale discounts from the local sporting goods stores to help us acquire sufficient equipment. We will loan personal gear to fill any gaps. Additional funding solicited from Charlotte Martin Foundation, Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation and Flathead's Electric Coop Roundup for Safety Program will help support future expansion.

Ravenwood offers scholarship opportunities whenever possible to individuals in need. We have submitted a grant application to the Flathead Community Foundation and requested a donation from the Flathead Rotary in an effort build our scholarship fund. Five other local organizations have pledged a total of \$1,000 in scholarship moneys. Our intent is to obtain \$3,000 in scholarship revenue for the coming year, and we will allocate a significant portion to our *Teen Winter Camp* participants.