



For Immediate Release

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Pollinator Planting Project Takes Root in Michigan

Career Tech Agriscience Students Plant 2,000 Seedlings to Support Pollinator Habitat

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – Students in the [Agriscience](#) program at Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech got their hands dirty Monday, May 23, by planting about 2,000 seedlings at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm along Keystone Road to improve habitat for pollinators like monarch butterflies and bees.

The first of its kind in Michigan, the project is a partnership involving Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District, Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. and the Agriscience program at North Ed Career Tech.

Students in Brian Matchett's Agriscience program raised the native pollinator plants from seed, including the stratification and germination of the seeds in the Career Tech greenhouse all the way to putting them in the ground. They'll also gain experience monitoring the project through the summer and fall.

"Pollinator plants and the insects and animals that use them play a critical role in supporting our agricultural operations, so this project has not only an educational component and value for my students, but an environmental value to our region as well," Matchett said. "I am grateful to all of the partners for coming together to make this project happen and allowing the students to get an incredible hands-on experience that is truly making a difference in their community."

The project was made possible through a \$1,000 Pollinator Habitat Grant from Sand County Foundation, based in Madison, Wisconsin. The grant program is designed to create or enhance habitat for pollinators and monarch butterflies by providing teachers and schools with resources for classroom and in-the-field initiatives.

Similar projects funded through Sand County Foundation have taken place in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, involving school districts and FFA chapters, but this is the first to occur in Michigan.

"We are pleased with how Brian and North Ed took the lead in pilot testing this program in Michigan, and we hope to support more schools in the state in the coming years," said Craig Ficenece, program director at Sand County Foundation.

Local business Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. provided tools and resources to help students with the planting, while the Grand Traverse Conservation District provided the land by allowing students to plant on part of its Great Lakes Incubator Farm – an active land-based agricultural program that fosters the growth and development of new and beginning farmers in the region, according to the group's [website](#).

“The Grand Traverse Conservation District is very pleased to work with the Agriscience department on this project,” said Koffi Kpachavi, executive director of the GTCD. “The Career Tech students have been involved in other projects with the District in the past, and we have always been impressed by their hard work and dedication. This pollinator planting is a great addition to our burgeoning incubator farm program and will serve as an educational tool for years to come.”

Agriscience student Ella Sherman, a junior from Traverse City Central High School, intends to learn more about plants, sustainability and environmental science at Michigan State University after graduation. She said the pollinator project was a good opportunity to raise awareness of the importance and intricacies of our food system, and a way to support the community.

“I think it's just overall a really good program,” Sherman said of the Agriscience class. “We get to give back to our community, we get to build upon leadership skills and essential skills for when we're actually going out into the real world, so I think there are a lot of opportunities for growth personally and career-wise.”

Since Sand County Foundation launched its [Pollinator Habitat Grant Program](#) in 2017, grants have been awarded to 65 high schools across Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, engaging more than 70 teachers and 2,000 students to plant more than 30,000 wildflower plugs in rural areas.

[Agriscience](#) is one of 21 career and technical education programs offered at North Ed Career Tech. Students gain hands-on experience in agriculture projects, caring for animals, conservation and sustainability practices and more. To learn more about Agriscience and the other programs offered at Career Tech, visit www.NorthwestEd.org/Career_Tech

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North Ed Career Tech offers [21 programs](#) to high school juniors and seniors from Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties. Students are educated in career and technical fields offering hands-on practical experiences, job shadowing, career exploration and early college opportunities, along with rigorous academic integration. For more information about North Ed Career Tech, [click here](#).

Sand County Foundation inspires and empowers a growing number of private landowners to ethically manage natural resources in their care, so future generations have clean and abundant water, healthy soil to support agriculture and forestry, plentiful habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation. www.sandcountyfoundation.org



Matchett-1: Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech Agriscience instructor Brian Matchett talks to his students at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm on Monday, May 23, along Keystone Road. Agriscience students completed a project planting about 2,000 seedlings to enhance habitat for pollinators like monarch butterflies and bees. The project was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)



Matchett-2: Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech Agriscience instructor Brian Matchett holds up an auger bit as he talks to his students at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm on Monday, May 23. Agriscience students used augers to bore holes in the ground to plant about 2,000 seedlings in a project aimed at enhancing habitat for pollinators like monarch butterflies and bees. The project was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)





Students-1, 2, 3: Students in the Agriscience program at Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech plant seedlings at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm on Monday, May 23, as part of a project to enhance habitat for pollinators. The project was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)



Class-1: Gabrielle Waterman, a paraprofessional in the Agriscience program at Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech, left, holds a bag of supplies used in a project designed to improve habitat for pollinators as Agriscience program students look on. The students planted about 2,000 seedlings at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm on Monday, May 23, as part of the project, which was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)



Class-2: Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech students, from left, Bella Wolf, senior, St. Mary Senior High School; Grace Robinson, senior, Bellaire High School; Yasmine Baylon, senior, Traverse City Central High School; and Mackenzie Bergemann, senior, Traverse City Central High School, pose for a photo with seedlings they grew as part of a project designed to improve pollinator habitat. The students planted about 2,000 seedlings at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm on Monday, May 23, as part of the project, which was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison’s Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)



Class-3: From left, Jarret Van Skyhock, a senior at Glenn Lake High School, and Sean Woodworth, a Traverse City West High School senior, work in the greenhouse at Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech. Students in the Agriscience program planted about 2,000 seedlings Monday, May 23, at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm as part of a project designed to improve habitat for pollinators. The project was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)



Class-4: From left, Lydia Afton, a junior from Grand Traverse Academy, and Leann Porter, a senior at Kingsley High School, work in the greenhouse at Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech. Students in the Agriscience program planted about 2,000 seedlings Monday, May 23, at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm as part of a project designed to improve habitat for pollinators. The project was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)



Class-5: Caiden Brister, a Traverse City West High School junior, works in the greenhouse at Northwest Education Services (North Ed) Career Tech. Students in the Agriscience program planted about 2,000 seedlings Monday, May 23, at the Great Lakes Incubator Farm as part of a project designed to improve habitat for pollinators. The project was a partnership between the Career Tech Agriscience program, Sand County Foundation, the Grand Traverse Conservation District and Gillison's Variety Fabrication Inc. (Photo courtesy of Northwest Education Services)