

High Rocks program description 2016

High Rocks Educational Corporation was founded in 1996, with the mission to educate, empower and inspire young people of West Virginia and beyond. High Rocks programs primarily serve young people ages 13 to 25 in Greenbrier, Nicholas and Pocahontas counties in West Virginia. High Rocks has two community youth centers, the Hub in downtown Lewisburg and Steele Studio on Main Street in Richwood.

Throughout the school year, High Rocks offers college access, enrichment workshops, tutoring, and one-on-one mentoring. College access consists of a minimum of four college trips, where High Rocks participants visit three or more colleges on each trip. In the summertime, High Rocks facilitates two youth camps. New Beginnings camp for young women that are 13 years old, who are new to the High Rocks programs and Camp Steele, for young women ages 14 to 18 who are returning High Rocks girls or new to the High Rocks programs. All programs that High Rocks offers to our young people are completely free of charge.

High Rocks is ready to take our food program to the next level. This includes opening a smoothie bar operate and manage by young people, upgrading the High Rocks kitchen so that community members can use it to make products, such as Appalachian Kimchi, sold in stores, provide training programs to students and community members to give them the knowledge of how to run a business and produce and preserve their own food. We are asking for support from the Ruddle Memorial Youth Foundation as we take on this endeavor. High Rocks is building a network of resources that will connect our community members and our young people, and your support is critical to our success.

The High Rocks participants are invested in the success of the High Rocks gardens because they are a part of the planning, planting, care and harvesting process of the gardens at High Rocks. The Hub, our youth center in downtown Lewisburg, is partnering with the Lewisburg Farmers' Market to teach students in Lewisburg how to grow and preserve their own food. The Hub will also house a smoothie bar, run by young people that are currently working with local business owners to write and implement a business plan to ensure the smoothie bar will produce affordable snacks with as many locally grown ingredients as available.

High Rocks expanded our kitchen in the last two years, to provide meals to our growing number of participants; our kitchen in Hillsboro is certified to serve food. The next step for our local foods program is to connect our young people to local entrepreneurs by providing a space for community to come in to produce the foods that they sell for a living. In order to do this, upgrades are necessary in order for certification of our commercial kitchen. We will also have to provide our young people and community members with trainings on what it means to have a commercial, including maintaining a clean and functional workspace. There are already multiple community volunteers that have started working on the paper work required to get High Rocks certified as a commercial kitchen.

So much excitement comes from the food program at High Rocks. This summer the girls learned how to make coleslaw and Nettle pesto with ingredients they harvested from the garden and continued to work with until they had a delicious final product. These were teenagers, who only ate potato chips and soda for lunch every day, glowing with pride at what they had accomplished and using their experiences to get other excited about trying new things as well.

High Rocks is expanding our food program, to provide a space for young people to learn about healthy eating choice and to give community members a space where they can manufacture food to be sold in local stores. In an area where farm to table is so highly practiced, it will be no challenge to our participants and their families to take on learning and mastering what it takes to be a commercial food producer. This will build the confidence of our community feeling self-sufficient and reduce the poverty level in homes that don't have a way to secure an income.

With support from the Ruddle Memorial Youth Foundation, we will complete the required upgrades for our kitchen to become a certified commercial kitchen, as well as train our students and community members on how to successfully produce and preserve food in large quantities. Your support will also allow us to hire and train young people to run a business. With the high poverty rate and unemployment rate in this area, these programs will work to lower those numbers, as well as, give the young people hired in the smoothie bar the knowledge required to be financially stable as an adult. The skills learned in our food program will not only benefit the participants directly, but also their families, friends and community members. Once they learn how to be more self-sustained, they can pass along their knowledge.