



ELKHART
Environmental
— CENTER —

Annual Report



2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Special “Thank You”

The Elkhart Environmental Center extends a special thank you to the volunteers, organizations, and businesses who have supported the EEC. Our success is dependent on the many volunteers and supporters that we work with throughout the year. We are particularly grateful for the support we received in such an adverse and unusual year.

Partners

The following organizations have worked with, supported, and/or hosted the Elkhart Environmental Center’s community engagement and education efforts in 2020:

- Acts of Service
- Borden Waste-Away
- Center for Civic Innovation
- Elkhart Community Schools
- Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Elkhart County Parks
- Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Elkhart County Waterways Alliance
- Elkhart Education Foundation
- Elkhart Public Library
- Froggy 102.7 FM
- Goshen College
- Goshen Community Schools
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Indiana Forest Alliance
- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
- Indiana University Environmental Resilience Institute
- Indiana Wildlife Federation
- Inside Outside Michiana
- Lippert Components
- WNDU

Sponsors

The following organizations have generously donated funds and/or services to support the Elkhart Environmental Center’s community engagement and education and site improvement efforts in 2020:

- Borden Waste-Away
- Community Foundation of Elkhart County
- Harbor Freight*
- Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Indiana Michigan Power*
- Johnson Products*
- League of Women Voters
- Lippert Components
- Mid-States Construction
- TouchTronics, Inc.
- Rex & Alice A. Martin Foundation

* Some sponsor funds were donated for special events which were cancelled in 2020 and will be used in 2021

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Vision

The Elkhart Environmental Center is an environmental education entity that actively contributes to a sustainable society and economy in the city and the region.

Mission Statement

The Elkhart Environmental Center works together with citizens, community groups, city entities, and other organizations to protect and improve the local environment and advance community-wide environmental responsibility through public education and outreach, stewardship of its site, and partnerships.

Objectives

- Provide childhood and adult environmental/sustainability education programs and resources
- Provide a safe, managed green space for visitors and wildlife
- Engage the community in environmental management, restoration, and education programs

Master Plan Goals Accomplished

The following are goals specifically outlined in the Master Plan developed in 2016 that were accomplished or begun in 2020:

Improve Access and Aesthetics of EEC's Adjacent Context

- ✔ Improve signage at Lusher Ave. and Main St. intersection
- ✔ Limb up trees and reduce understory plants at key locations
- ✔ Utilize the resource of the River to create nodes to expose river travelers to the EEC and EEC visitors to the River

Improve EEC Site Function, Health, and Aesthetics

- ✔ Improve conditions of existing trails
- ✔ Improve internal signage
- ✔ Better highlight ecosystem zones

Enhance Programming and Partnerships

- ✔ Establish Friends of the EEC group
- ✔ Reconnect with regional school systems
- ✔ Develop a partnership with regional universities to establish Adult Education program

Optimize Operations

- ✔ Update office space
- ✔ Improve aesthetics and function of area adjacent to cabin
- ✔ Develop stronger partnership with Parks Department
- ✔ Keep site open 24 hours a day



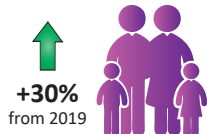
New Stone Planters



New Pavilion

STATISTICS

Programs and Engagement



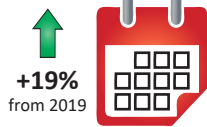
821
attendees



310
students



206
volunteers



43
public
programs



20
student
programs



326
volunteer
programs



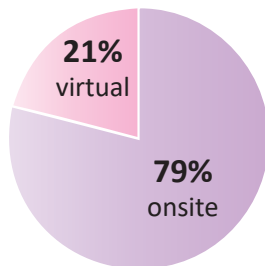
COVID19 Note:

Due to health and safety concerns, the City of Elkhart shut down between March 25 - April 22 and the Elkhart Environmental Center's Visitor's Cabin remained closed to the public for the remainder of the year. With the exception of outdoor and virtual programming, all typical events and programs were canceled.



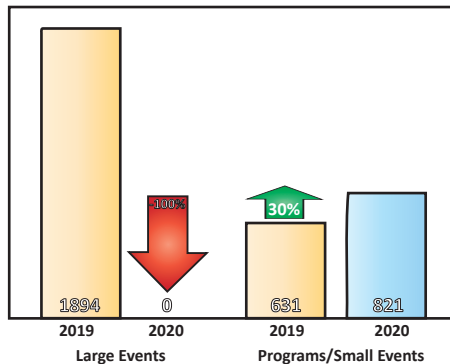
Adult/Family Education: Programs and Events Overview

Total Attendance: 821



Programs/Events

- Meditation Yoga
- Indiana Forest Alliance initiatives
- Eco-Valentine's Day
- Sustainability in Elkhart
- Climate Action Planning
- Recycling Craft Day
- Bat House Building Workshop
- Ecosystem Hikes
- Insect House Building
- Lorax Programming
- Fall Scavenger Hunt
- Pumpkin Carving
- Green Your Halloween
- Haunted Walk Through the Woods
- Backyard Habitat Workshop
- Elkhart River Clean Ups
- Holiday Hoorah
- Various tabling/presentation events
- Reading Round-Ups

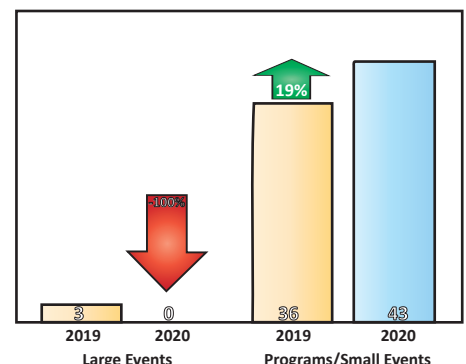
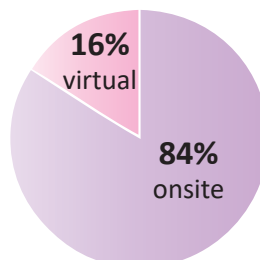


Partners

- Elkhart Parks Department
- Elkhart Public Library
- INDNR Fish & Wildlife Service
- Pheasants Forever
- Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Elkhart Education Foundation
- ETHOS
- League of Women Voters
- Kiwanis Club
- Michiana Master Gardener's Association
- Indiana Wildlife Federation



**Total Amount of
Programs/Events: 43**

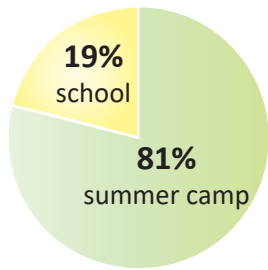


STATISTICS

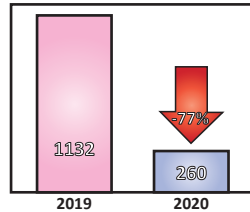


Childhood Education: Overview

Total Students:
310



Education Program Attendance



Programs

- Recycling
- Compost
- Stormwater
- Invasive species
- Natural history
- Ecology
- Hydrology
- Sustainability
- Restoration/Land management

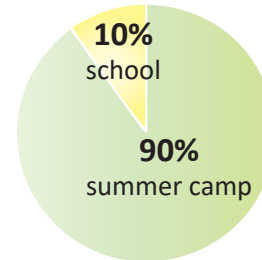
Partners

- Pierre Moran Middle School
- Elkhart Christian Academy
- Mary Beck Elementary
- Summerscape
- Growing Kids
- Elkhart Education Foundation

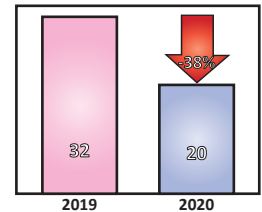


Recycled Craft Activity

Total Amount of Education Programs: 20

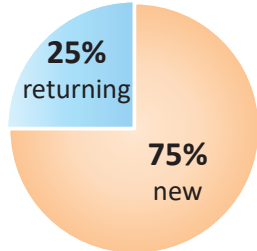


Amount of Education Programs

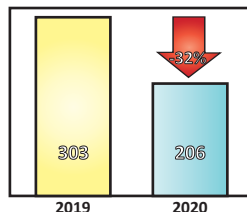


Volunteer Program: Overview

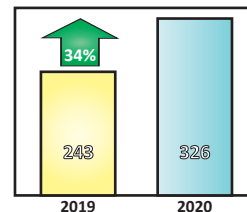
Total Volunteers:
206



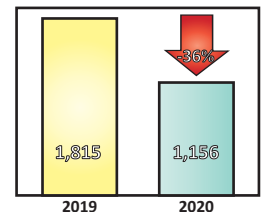
Volunteers



Amount of Volunteer Programs



Volunteer Hours



Programs/Events

- Meditation Yoga
- Adopt-A-Trail
- Adopt-A-Plot
- Quilt Garden
- River Cleanups
- Rain Garden Restoration
- Educational Programming
- Trail/Site Maintenance
- Community Service
- Work Days
- Planning Meetings
- Invasive Species Removal

Partners

- Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce Leadership Academy
- Lippert Components
- Indiana Master Naturalists
- Acts of Service
- Elkhart General Hospital



Quilt Garden



River Clean Up

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Adult/Family Education: Programs and Events

Though we had to cancel or alter many of our traditional programs/events, we were able to continue to host outdoor programs with additional safety measures and to provide some virtual programming, as well. This year, despite challenges, we were able to provide more public programs and reach more visitors than last year! New programs were introduced this year, including:

- 🌿 Bat House Building Workshop
- 🌿 Insect House Building Workshop
- 🌿 Ecosystem Hikes
- 🌿 Reading Round-Ups
- 🌿 Lorax Programming
- 🌿 Pumpkin Carving
- 🌿 Green Your Halloween
- 🌿 Haunted Walk Through the Woods
- 🌿 Recycled Turkey Craft
- 🌿 Winter Birding Activity
- 🌿 Fall Scavenger Hunt

Climate Action Conversations: This new program series is a part of our ongoing effort to create a Climate Action Plan for the City of Elkhart. These virtual sessions provide the public with updates about the Climate Action Planning process, information about environmental management practices included in the plan, as well as providing an avenue for public input and discussion. This series will continue into 2021 and possibly beyond as we move forward with the Climate Action Planning process.



Childhood Education

While our childhood education programming was largely impacted by COVID19, we were still able to conduct some outside programs over the summer with safety precautions in place. However, due to City policy, we were unable to conduct any programs during the regular school year. Through our partnership with the Elkhart Education Foundation, we were able to conduct childhood education programs on the topics of:

- 🌿 Food Webs
- 🌿 Natural vs. Man-Made Disturbances
- 🌿 Land Management
- 🌿 Stormwater
- 🌿 Trees
- 🌿 Invasive Species
- 🌿 Natural History
- 🌿 Recycling
- 🌿 Environmental/Conservation Careers



New Interpretive Trail Signs



Volunteer Program

The Elkhart Environmental Center has long relied on the support of volunteers to staff our large events, lead programming, and to manage our site. Unfortunately, we missed seeing many of our regular volunteers due to COVID19 restrictions and the cancellation of many of our programs events. However, we are still so grateful for the support that we received in helping to maintain and update our site! Major project accomplishments for our volunteer program this year include:

- 🌿 Installation and maintenance of new Quilt Garden
- 🌿 Replanting island rain garden
- 🌿 Building benches on observation deck
- 🌿 Installation of stone planter around entrance sign posts
- 🌿 Maintenance of Learning Garden
- 🌿 Trash removal from 2 Elkhart River Cleanups
- 🌿 EEC office renovations



Office Renovations
(February)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Site Management

We were once again able to hire two interns, however this year both interns focused on site management due to our limited capacity for programs/events. With help from our interns and volunteers, we were able to:

- Add new gravel to our public boat launch, clear the area for better visibility, and add signage
- Stain, paint, and retouch the sign for our Learning Garden
- Repaint and restore our deck, stairs, and bridges
- Remove significant amounts of invasive honeysuckle and tree of heaven from our ecosystems
- Resume restoration efforts for our eastern prairie, including mowing and herbicide in preparation for replanting all-native prairie species
- Clean and organize the inside of our Visitor's Cabin
- Clean and organize volunteer tool shed
- Create and install new interpretive trail signs
- Invasive hemlock removal from western prairie

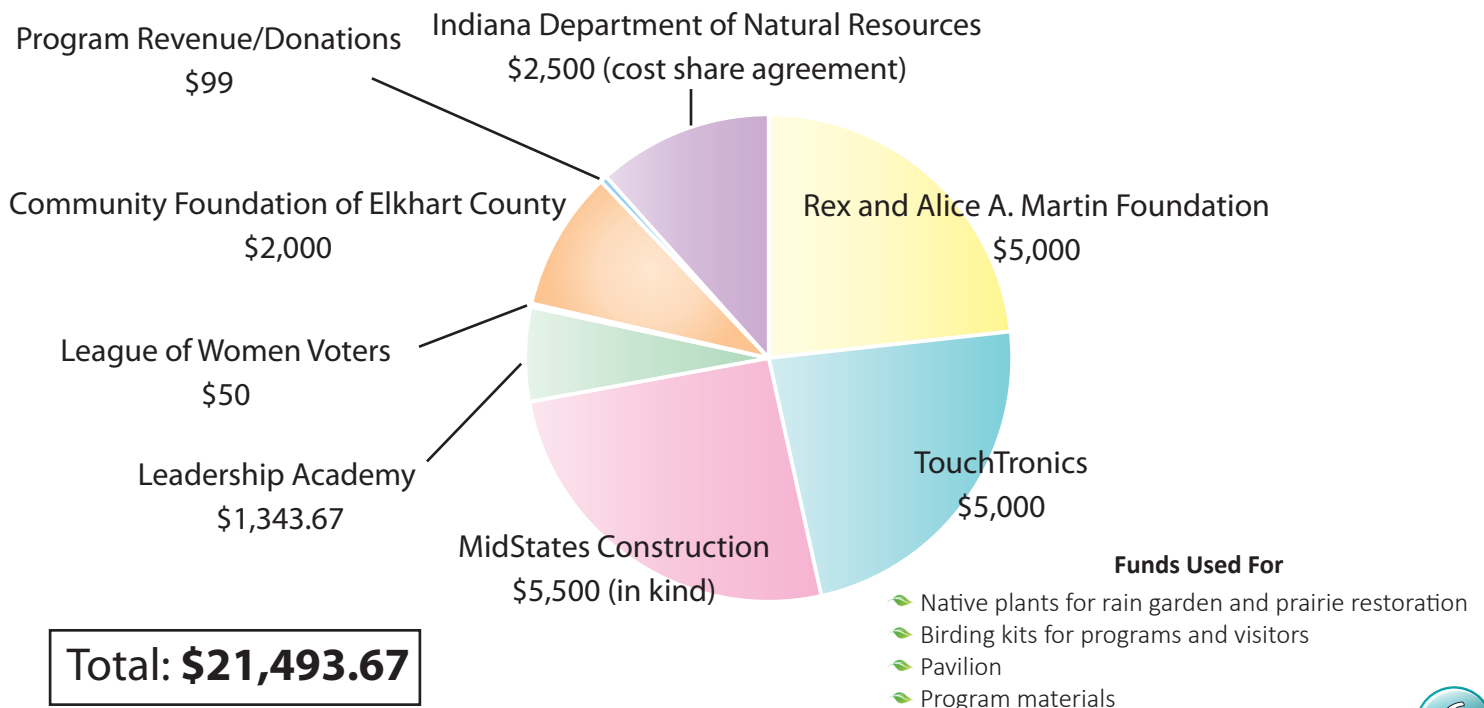
Pavilion: Thanks in large part to our group from the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Academy, a new pavilion was constructed right next to the EEC's Visitor's Cabin. Our Leadership Academy team worked with the Rex and Alice A. Martin Foundation, TouchTronics, Inc., and MidStates Construction to fund-raise for the construction. Their hard work and accomplishments were celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The pavilion was a timely addition: it enabled us to do more outdoor and social-distanced programming than before!

Stone Planters: Eagle Scout Jay Keen began work on this project in the summer. With help from Mark Walker and donations from Kuert Concrete, this project was completed in late fall. We are planning to have a ribbon cutting ceremony in spring 2021.



Fundraising

In previous years, the majority of our fundraising efforts are focused on our large events, such as Earth Day and EnviroFest. This year, however, fundraising mainly came from program or project donations, as listed below.



* Some sponsor funds were donated for special events and will be used in 2021 and so are not included in this graph