

Tallgrass Prairie Center

The Tallgrass Prairie Center (TPC) is associated with the University of Northern Iowa and houses four programs that serve all of Iowa and beyond through the work of seven permanent staff. These programs include the Iowa Roadside Management Program, the Prairie on Farms Program, the Research and Restoration Program, and the Plant Materials Program. The TPC's mission is to empower people to value and restore resilient, diverse tallgrass prairie.



Bianca Cook (11-Month, 2022), a GIA member serving at the Center for Energy and Environmental Education, holding sweet clover during a removal effort at Bennington Township Cemetery.

Green Iowa AmeriCorps

The Green Iowa AmeriCorps (GIA) Program's mission is to empower Iowa's communities and school districts to make environmental, conservation-minded decisions and improvements by engaging our AmeriCorps members in direct service work, environmental education, professional development opportunities, and volunteer engagement. The TPC became a GIA host site in 2019, and the two programs have been supporting both missions effectively over the past four years. Each year the TPC hosts two 11-month full-time members and two three-month part-time summer members.

Where are they now?

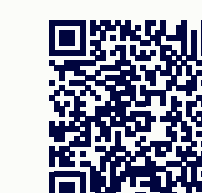
- Andy Olson (11-Month, 2021) Tallgrass Prairie Center, IA
- Aaron Sanderson (11-Month, 2021) Conservation Work, NV
- Baillie Bautch-Breitung (3-Month, 2021) U.S. Forest Service, UT
- Anna Perdue (3-Month, 2021) Grinnell College, IA
- Andrew Rust (11-Month, 2022) Trees Forever, IA
- Will Kopp (3-Month, 2022) Upper Iowa University, IA
- Karlee Ostendorf (3-Month, 2022) Hawkeye Community College, IA
- D.J. Brooks (3-Month, 2019) Valent Biosciences, IL
- Zach Fuller (3-Month, 2019) Intelligent Audit, MN
- Rowan McMullen Cheng (11-Month, 2020) AnswerLab, MN
- Paige Shafer (11-Month, 2020) Des Moines Botanical Center, IA
- Ethan Evans (3-Month, 2020 & 11-Month, 2021) University of Virginia, VA
- Kari Wellman (3-Month, 2020) Rocky Mountain Field Institute, CO

Green Iowa AmeriCorps Projects at the Tallgrass Prairie Center

- All About the Prairie Coloring Book - Bri Hull (11-Month, 2022 & 2023) Downloaded 1300 times on ScholarWorks.



- UNI Biological Preserves and Campus Trails Maps - Mallory Sage (11-Month, 2023) First consolidated Campus Trails Map of unpaved trail network at UNI.



- Tallgrass Prairie Center Botany Beginners Virtual Series #1 - Paige Shafer (11-Month, 2021) Coordinated and organized online video series with over 3000 participants across 6 videos.



- Natural Areas Volunteer Coordination - Andrew Rust (11-Month, 2022) & Bri Hull (11-Month, 2022 & 2023) Generated a consistent and continual method of volunteer recruitment, drawing in 120 registered volunteers for brush removal and burn seasons events in 2022 and 2023.

Opportunities and Experiences

Green Iowa AmeriCorps members participate in required and individually chosen trainings that allow them to gain certifications and skills to support their work at the TPC and in the future. Trainings include some of the following.

- Izaak Walton League Water Quality Testing Certification
- Grant Writing Training and Certification
- General and Category 6 - Right of Way Pesticide Applicator Certification
- Basic safety and chainsaw management certification through Bur Oak Land Trust
- Prescribed Burn Certifications (L180, S190, S130)
- General research training and experience
- Iowa prairie plant identification (Botany for Beginners, Botany Bootcamp)



Bri Hull (11-Month, 2022 & 2023) carries drip torch during a prescribed burn at Irvine Prairie, spring 2022.



Bri Hull (11-Month, 2022 & 2023) removes walnut saplings from Daryl Smith Prairie, spring 2023.



Andrew Rust (11-Month, 2022) prepares for pesticide application using a stump stick, spring 2022.

Metrics and Impact

YEAR	OUTREACH EVENTS	VOLUNTEERS	EDUCATION EVENTS	PARTICIPANTS
2019 - 2020	78	64	20	3379
2020 - 2021	51	186	43	2153
2021 - 2022	74	144	35	554
2022 - 2023	51	220	24	2691
Total	254	614	122	8777

Green Iowa AmeriCorps Service at the Tallgrass Prairie Center

Volunteer Recruitment

Student volunteers assist with a prairie burn at the TPC production plots, spring 2023.

Educational Programming

Aaron Sanderson (11-Month, 2021) studies grass during Botany Bootcamp, spring 2021.

Land Management

Andrew Rust (11-Month, 2022) assists with planting plugs at Irvine Prairie, spring 2022.

Capacity Building

Summer GIA members help pull thistle at the TPC production plots, summer 2019.

Since 2019, the TPC has hosted 17 GIA members serving either 11-month or 3-month terms. Their total hours in service amount to over 16,000. This time does not include additional hours served by GIA members from neighboring host sites that assist during collaborative events and workdays. Through their service, individual GIA members gain experience in land stewardship while increasing work capacity for the TPC.

"I'm proud to be a member of Green Iowa AmeriCorps because it allows me to be a part of something bigger than myself. Every day we serve, we make more positive change for the environment and our community."

Ali Peck (3-Month, 2023)



Ali Peck (3-Month, 2023) leads a tour at Irvine Prairie during the dedication ceremony held June 9th 2023, celebrating the additional gift of 215 acres in Benton County by Cathy Irvine.