

Green Clubs
Resource Guide
for Middle and High School
Environmental-Focused Clubs



My Defenders contact is:

Name _____

Email _____

Phone Number _____





Inspiration from our Executive Director

The Defenders, as we have been affectionately known for 50 years, was founded by everyday people who were concerned about a project in the late 1960s, that if completed, would have a negative impact on the health of the natural environment of the Fox River valley and watershed. The passion and commitment of individuals who banded together for the good of the planet were successful in protecting our precious natural resources. It took fortitude and patience, as all important and meaningful work does. Since then, all that we have done and continue to do reflects the concerns and passion of people of all ages, from youth, young professionals, mid-life and senior; from professionals in the field to people who simply care deeply about our environment and the future of our special place on planet Earth. So, I encourage this generation – *your generation* – to pick up this thread and help weave a healthier future for you and those who come after you. We are at a critical stage where there's a lot of promise, but still a lot of education to be shared and work to be done. You can and will be the leaders, for example, in plastic and food waste reduction, clean energy, healthy drinking water, and preservation of open space for the health of our planet and its eco-systems, of which humans are a part, for the next 50 years and more.

I'm looking forward to working with you and for The Defenders to supporting you in your endeavor to start or strengthen an environmental club in your school. I wish you all the best as you connect with all fellow students, teachers, parents and the general community as we work together toward a better planet now for the sake of a healthier and prosperous collective future not only for the human species, but for all living things. We cannot get there without you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia".

Cynthia Kanner

Executive Director, Environmental Defenders of McHenry County

Who We Are

Environmental Defenders of McHenry County

The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County is a nonprofit group that began in 1970. Locally the group is referred to as the Defenders. The group focusses on making McHenry County a healthier place to live for all.

The mission is stated below

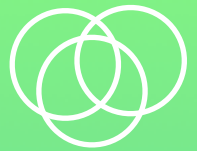
In order to protect all living things, the Environmental Defenders is dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the natural environment in McHenry County. As a grass roots organization, we are committed to building sound ecological relationships between people and the natural world that supports all life.

In order to accomplish the mission, the Defenders work through activism and a deep love for our natural world. Three simple words sum up the mission of the Defenders: Preserve. Protect. Educate.

From the formation of the McHenry County Conservation District to curbside recycling, from the regulation of gravel mining to the passage of the Illinois Groundwater Protection Act, the Defenders have been at the front line, working closely with local, municipal, and county governments while advocating for a healthy environment.

A Little History

From the beginning, the Defenders has been instrumental in many environmental successes ~ stopping the Fox Valley Freeway (twice! in the early 70's and again in the early 90's); saving Allerton Park near Decatur; protecting Volo Bog and Wilson Bog as Illinois Nature Preserves and an Illinois State Natural Area; banning phosphates in detergents; crafting a Crystal Lake watershed protection ordinance; protecting the Middlefork River near Danville; saving Ryder's Woods in Woodstock; forming the McHenry County Conservation District; passing the Illinois Groundwater Protection Act and the Solid Waste Management Act; regulating gravel mining in McHenry County; preventing landfills on permeable soils in McHenry County; stopping power plants from being built on agricultural lands, and aiding in the adoption of the McHenry County Stormwater Ordinance.





Defenders' Environmental Club Initiative

Students have an important role to play in preserving and protecting the environment. Your club will directly impact not only your fellow students involved in the club, but all students, the environmental health of your school and the community as a whole. You can also impact the adults in your life by teaching them about environmental issues. The future will be lead by young people, like you, who continue to develop environmental practices such as plastic reduction, recycling, energy conservation, and environmental restoration.

Inclusion

The goal of inclusion strategies is so the club's population is reflective of the school's population. Inclusive teaching strategies refer to any number of approaches that address the needs of students with a variety of backgrounds, learning modalities, and abilities. These strategies contribute to an overall inclusive learning environment in which members feel equally valued. See page ____ for specific ideas on inclusion.

Available Club Resources

Project Guides to help you to complete environmental projects.

Adult liaison who can answer questions and help with project resources.

A variety of additional free resources, including connection to community partners for service and educational opportunities.

The Green Club Initiative is the result of the interaction between Education Action Team of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry and MCSEEP (McHenry County School Environmental Education Program).

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Starting or Growing a Club with an Environmental Focus

1. Enlist members

At first don't worry about how many members you have. Regardless of the number of people you have interested, 5 or 50, you can start an environmental club. Your club will grow naturally when your fellow students see the variety of activities your club hosts and the positive impact you are making in your local environment. Make the effort to be inclusive and have your club reflect the diversity of your school.

2. Get an Advisor

The next step is to find a faculty member who will agree to allow you to meet in the classroom at lunch or after school. Approach this person and simply ask. Consider asking a parent or community leader to be a co-advisor. Supportive adults from your community help share responsibilities of advising a club.

3. Establish a Charter

Rules about establishing a club vary from school district to school district. Check with your student government and find out what you need to do to make your club official.

4. Conduct Meetings

Set a recurring meeting day and time and stick to it no matter how few or many people are there at first. Do not waste time trying to reach an ideal number. Get started. Page 7 has information on conducting meetings and a sample agenda.

5. Choose a Project

The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County has developed several Project Guides to provide structure. You are not limited to these projects but they may be helpful to think through the types of projects you want to complete. A list of a current Guides can be found on page 8. More Guides and resources are being developed. Email Pam King at pduncanking@gmail.com for access to resource guides.

6. Register

Register your club with The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County by contacting Pam King at pduncanking@gmail.com to be assigned a club liaison that will provide you with contact information to help with resources and advice.

7. Get to Work

Using the Resource Guide and the Project Guides, get to work. Reach out to your club liaison if you need help.

8. Share your Accomplishments and Celebrate! - See page 12 for ideas.

HINT:

Don't forget to celebrate your achievements.

Celebrations will help motivate and unify your club.

Enlist Members

Growing your membership

If your club wants to grow its membership, here are some ideas to attract students to your group.

Advertise your club with posters, signs, articles in the school paper, and announcements. Be sure to get administrative approval before posting signs at the school.

Involve students in earning service learning credit or service hours by engaging in club activities. Service hours can be found through various organizations listed in the resource guide and can be implemented within the Project Guides.

Host a “bring a friend meeting” with light refreshments. Include a brief orientation/ice breaker. Be sure to greet all new arrivals and address them by name.

Invite successful professionals from your community to guest speak. Make a pitch for membership. The Speakers Bureau of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County is an excellent resource for finding and scheduling speakers. You can find out more information about the Speakers Bureau at <insert web link here>

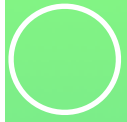
Being Inclusive

- ✱ Partner with multicultural student groups at your school to create in-school events.
- ✱ Organize specific short-term events for underrepresented student groups.
- ✱ Partner with classes to promote service-learning opportunities.
- ✱ Reach out to teachers of students that are underrepresented in school activities to promote your club

Create a sense of belonging for your membership during meetings

- ✱ Make introductions immediately of new members
- ✱ Use names (You may want to make name tents or name tags)
- ✱ Set standards of appropriate discourse
- ✱ Allow input from the membership on future activities
- ✱ Encourage different voices to be heard

Further information on Club structure can be found on page 9.



HINT:

The best way to attract and keep members is to have a fun and active club!





Conduct Meetings

Follow a consistent agenda for each meeting. This lets your members know what to expect and to ensure you reach your goals. Set a time for starting the meeting that is consistent whether you are meeting weekly or monthly.

Sample Agenda

1. Post the Agenda

- Use a chalk board, white board, or slide show to save paper.
- Generally the Secretary posts the agenda.

2. Call the Meeting to Order on Time

- President calls meeting to order
- Secretary takes attendance
- President acknowledges any new members and makes them feel welcome.
- Guest are introduced and welcome

3. Ice-breaker or other group activity

4. Treasurer Report

- Give financial report, as needed

5. Public Relations Coordinator Report

- Announce any upcoming events
- Pass around signup sheets for upcoming events

6. Club Business

- Discuss current projects and action items
- Committee reports
- Secretary records the names of those who have volunteered to take on tasks and includes these in notes

7. Adjournment

- President adjourns the meeting

Club Name and LOGO

Choose a name for your club. If you register with Pam King of the Education Action Team. You may add the following subtitle - A Defenders' Green Club

Design a logo for your club. You can put your logo on t-shirts, a club twitter or instagram feed, and your flyers. Your logo can help unite your members and advertise your club. Local places that help with logo and t-shirt design are listed in the appendix.

HINTS:

Hold meetings at the same day and time each week or month.

Think of easy ways to take attendance such as passing around roster or picking up name tags.

Have a clear agenda & highlight upcoming events.

Choose a Project

This is the fun part! As a group, choose a project to complete by answering the questions below. The Environmental Defenders Education Action Team has a variety of Project options that provide you with guidelines you need to make a difference in your community.

Waste Reduction and Recycling

Is your goal to reduce waste at your school or in the community?
Choose from these

- ➡ Electronic Waste Collection Event Guide
- ➡ Plastic Reduction Guide
- ➡ Styrofoam Collection Event Guide
- ➡ Coal Tar Sealant Reduction Guide

Transportation

Is your goal to reduce carbon emissions and encourage the use of green transportation at your school or in the community.

- ➡ Blke or Walk Week Project Guide

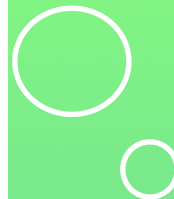
Water and Natural Resource Sustainability

Is your goal to help reduce flooding on your school grounds or capture water for a garden? Or help restore a watershed, heal the soil or conserve water?

- ➡ Rain Garden Guide
- ➡ Rain Barrel Project Guide
- ➡ Native Plant Garden Guide
- ➡ Propagating Natives Project Guide
- ➡ Adopting a Stream Project Guide
- ➡ Establishing a Bird Feeding Station Guide

**You may request any of these project guides
or you can develop your own.**

**At this time, please request a project guide by emailing
Pam King at pduncanking@gmail.com**



HINTS:

Ideally you will complete a project in all three areas during a school year to ensure the greatest sustainability for your school and your community.

Until your club grows, a best practice is to complete one project at a time.



Creating a Club Structure

Having good club structure is important for any club. Elect several members to take on specific roles will help moving run smoothly, ensure notes are taken and more. There are a variety of structures for establishing club leadership. Below are some suggestions.

President -This can be a senior or eighth grader.

- Facilitates all club meetings and works with the advisor to create the agenda.
- Acts as spokesperson for the club and a liaison between the club and student government
- Holds additional officer meetings and committee meetings as needed
- Supervises all other officers

Co-President (or Vice President) This must be an underclassman as this position should become president during the following year.

- Assists the president in the above duties.
- Oversees elections.

Secretary

- Takes notes at all meetings.
- Keeps notes organized and accessible.
- Posts agenda on the board for each meeting.
- Reports notes of previous meetings.
- Maintains a record of events attended or sponsored by the club.
- Maintains the club roster with names and contact information for each member.
- Keeps a calendar so that members can see upcoming events and meetings.

Treasurer

- Maintains records of all funds, raised, donated and spent
- Gives a financial report as needed.
- Assembles a team to help develop fundraising strategies and presents these ideas to the group. See page 11 for fundraising ideas.

Public Relations

- Acts as the club's publicity organizer
- Assembles a team to create all signs, posters and fliers for club events
- Acts as the top recruiter for new members. See page 6 for recruitment ideas.
- Circulates sign up sheets and schedules for upcoming events at meetings.
- Maintains public media accounts.

Project Coordinator

- Attends workshops offered by the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County for specific projects.
- Leads club activities to implements projects by the club.

Historian

Keeps records and maintains a record of major club events (both photos and videos)

Works with Public Relations to maintain the club website and other public media accounts

HINTS:

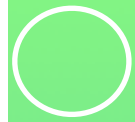
Initially you may not need all the positions.

However as your club grows adding additional positions help encourage inclusivity AND reduces the burden of leadership

Elections

Use a transparent democratic process to elect students who will best represent your club and will be dedicated to furthering your goals

1. Each spring vote for officers for the upcoming school year
2. Members who are interested in holding an office should read the job description on page 9 and submit their names for nomination
3. If more than one member is running for an office give all candidates a couple of minutes to take about why they thinks they are the best candidate.
4. Voting should take place by secret ballot.
5. Newly elected officers should work with outgoing officers for the last 2 meeting of the year to help with a smooth transition.



HINTS:

Keep all the interactions around the elections positive.

Focus should be on what each individual can do to advance the club goals.

If volunteer opportunities are limited, Officer position look great on college applications



Fundraising

Clubs like to fundraise to pay for simple things like a pizza party or ice cream social. Some clubs like to participate in parades by making a float which may require additional funds. In addition, some projects may have costs associated with implementation. For example, if your club decided to complete the “Propagating Natives” project, you might need to purchase pots or soils. Project Guides contain ideas and resources for how to cover the costs of implementing the project.

Be sure to check with your advisor and your school’s administration concerning the rules surrounding fundraising for a club.

Below are some green ideas that help with fundraising to use for your club. Also with all fundraisers, be sure to get permission first.

- ❖ Sell Reusable Shopping Bags.
- ❖ Host a “Game Night” and charge admission
- ❖ Have a native plant sale
- ❖ Sponsor a “yard” sale. People donate items for sale. These work really well, if specialized. For example: a Prom reuse sale for prom dresses, shoes, purses OR an athletic shoe resale for specialized shoes such as soccer shoes or football cleats.
- ❖ Host a used book sale
- ❖ Host a movie night and charge admission
- ❖ Sell produce from school maintained garden
- ❖ Host a tournament such as kickball, dodgeball, or even rock, paper scissors. Charge admission and have prizes.

HINTS:

Try to make fundraising easy.

Timing is essential in many fundraising activities.

Example: Host a movie night works well in Late January and a “Prom” yard sell works well in April.



Stay Connected

Social Media

Instagram/Twitter

Sharing your photos on Instagram or Twitter is great way to stay connected to other green clubs in McHenry County. Include the tag #DefendersClub

EarthConnect Newsletter

The quarterly newsletter of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County is at available at <http://mcdef.org/newsletters>. The newsletter provides information on activities of the entire organization. This is a good way to find ideas for field trips or service projects for your club.

Facebook

The Environmental Defenders has an active Facebook Page that can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalDefenders>. This site contains information on events. Links to related content, outings and volunteer opportunities can be found here.

Reporting

So we can acknowledge your work, send an email to your Defenders Contact be sure to include. Then check the EarthConnect Newsletter or Facebook to see your work in print.

The name of your school and club

The project your completed

Photos!

Celebrate your Accomplishments

Don't forget to celebrate. Consider the following options

- ➡ Ice cream or smoothie party
- ➡ Pizza party
- ➡ Field trip to local natural area

