

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Skowhegan Area Middle School 21st Century Community Learning Center –Tech Spot Skowhegan, Maine

Skowhegan Area Middle School	
Urbanicity: Rural Location: Skowhegan Area Middle & High Schools, Somerset Grist Mill Grades: 6-12 Eligible for free & reduced-price lunch: 61% Demographics: Caucasian	Community Partners: Somerset Public Health, Somerset Grist Mill Hours of Operation: Monday-Thursday, 2:30-4:30, Tues-Wed 5:00-7:00pm (at TS) For more information: Ron Bonnevie, rbonnevie@msad54.org

Overview

Skowhegan is a poor rural area in Maine. With the exception of a New Balance shoe factory and Sappi Paper Mill, it has little local manufacturing. Skowhegan has some of the richest natural resources in Maine. It is home to thriving outdoor recreation businesses, providing equipment for activities such as skiing, snowboarding, rafting and kayaking. Skowhegan's agricultural history is also strong. While many family farms closed in the 1950's, farms are now starting to come back run by young people with college educations who farm organic food, tapping into the local "slow food" movement. Restaurants, as a selling point, serve produce grown locally.

Maine used to be called the "breadbasket of the east" because of its grain production. The resurgence of the farms spurred a Skowhegan resident to open up an operational Grist Mill. To do so, the resident purchased and renovated an old county jail. One part of the building is devoted to the Mill itself, which is grinding wheat from local

farms, and the flour is distributed all over Maine. In addition to the Grist Mill, the location holds a weekly farmer's market in the parking lot, and rents, for very little money, space to local businesses and artisans.

Community Partnerships

The 21st CCLC program at Skowhegan has made great use of local resources to enhance their CTE program, in particular the use of technology along with community partnerships. The owner of the Somerset Grist Mill made inexpensive space available to local artisans and businesses, and currently houses a knit shop and a community radio station. The 21st CCLC was able to get a low-rent space in the Mill, to refurbish & open the "Tech Spot." It was renovated by staff and students in the summer of 2012, and furnished with donated furniture & computers by local donors.

Tech Spot

Tech Spot is a school/community collaborative, where students help adults with computing challenges in the Somerset Grist Mill. Students in the 21st CCLC helped to renovate and wire Tech Spot to prepare it as a tech lab. Students come to Tech Spot in the evenings, Tuesdays & Wednesdays from 5:00 to 7:00pm and volunteer their time to help community members learn about various aspects of the computer and the internet. For example, they help community members learn how to find videos on YouTube, how to conduct computer searches, how to read books on the computer and set up a Twitter account. Many of the community members who visit Tech Spot are seniors who are not comfortable with technology, or who cannot afford the technology. There is always an adult volunteer present to oversee the program. Students and volunteers participate in

preliminary training over the summer in preparation for the program provided by the Technology Integrationist from the middle school, and they also participate in an in-service training later in the school year. Tech Spot opened in September of 2012, and at the end of this school year, 2014-2015, will have completed its 3rd year of successful operation with many hours of volunteer service offered by the students (1660 hrs) and supervisors (470), and one to one tutoring to 125 adults, totaling 517 hours (at this time of writing, May of 2015) of free tech assistance offered to the community. To see an example of youth working at Tech Spot, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlwE1lDuAoI>

The Skowhegan 21st CCLC has sport and recreational equipment for the students' use, particularly a ropes course and several kayaks. This equipment is shared with the school, which is literally on the bank of a river heavily used for fishing & recreation. The school also resides on several acres of woods on which the ropes course has been installed. This has enhanced the 21st CCLC's relationship with the school, which sees them as a vital and useful resource. In addition, they have been able to link the recreational and sports work they do in the afterschool program with the recreational industry – for example, many middle school students go on to take a course on the recreational industry, Outdoor Resources, offered at the Somerset Technical Career Center, which is connected to the high school.