

# Alcona County Review

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Serving Alcona County for 135 Years

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## Alcona schools reap benefits of housing AmeriCorps education coordinator

By Mary Weber  
Staff Writer

Alcona schools is benefitting by being able to house an AmeriCorps education coordinator for a year.

The position, which is part of the Huron Pines AmeriCorps, is a designed to provide northern Michigan conservation organizations with qualified individuals for a term of volunteer service.

The individual chosen for this year's term is Helen-Ann Prince, an AmeriCorps Member Education Coordinator, who is serving the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. Prince works with schools from Oscoda to Rogers City, Mich. and Inland Lakes in Indian River, Mich., but does a great deal of her work from the Lincoln location.

"Normally my position is housed at the marine sanctuary (in Alpena) but I live in Oscoda, so they were able to work with me and allow me to be housed at Alcona schools," Prince said noting the location had its advantages due

to its convenience in working with many of the teachers at Alcona Community Schools and as a graduate of Alcona High School.

Huron Pines is a nonprofit organization whose major focus is conservation of natural resources, in fact, it is the only AmeriCorps chapter which focuses on helping educate people on natural

resources, Prince explained. "There are all kinds of (national) AmeriCorps chapters, there is a good will chapter which focuses on social work and counseling, there are others which focus on reading, but Huron Pines is the only one which focuses on conserving natural resources," Prince said.

Prince is a volunteer work-

ing with educators and community partners to promote place based education. Place based education allows students to receive hands-on, feet-wet projects which gets them out into the community. Students become stewards in their own community, which benefits the students and the community environment, she said.

"By having students be the lead role and help conduct a project it allows the students a sense of ownership in that and helps create future stewards of the natural resources," Prince said.

Some of the projects Prince is involved with include working with Alcona Elementary educator Christie Thomas and Rogers City school educator Holly Wirgau in helping them conduct a threatened and endangered species project.

Both teachers are working at two coastal parks; Thomas' class is going to Negwegon State Park and Wirgau's class will be trekking the

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building in Harrisville.

Anyone who does not want to collect signatures, may pay a \$100 filing fee in lieu of signatures, but must provide an identity affidavit. The filling fee is only done at the county clerk's office.

Completed petitions and affidavits may be turned in to either office when completed.

For more information about the process, contact the City of Harrisville at (989) 724-6666 or the county clerk's office at (989) 724-9410.



Helen-Ann Prince helps Alcona FFA students make maple syrup. *Courtesy photo.*

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# Benefits

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shoreline in Thompson's Harbor.

Students will conduct a writing project on the threatened and endangered species which can be found at that park. Then they will go on a field trip to the park where different stations will be set up to help educate them with a hands-on experience.

Another project Prince is working on is a student effort to help protect a hibernation habitat for local, rare bats. "A discovery was made that bats were hibernating in old quarry tunnels in the Rockport State Recreation Area, the tunnels were being filled in with gravel to keep the public out until they discovered the bats were using this critical habitat," Prince said.

"Now they are working to remove the gravel and instead place some sort of gate to keep the public out. I'm working very closely with the Alpena Industrial Arts program which is welding gates to insert in the tunnel that can be opened so the Department of Natural Resources can go in and conduct bat surveys when necessary, but keep the general public out due to unsafe conditions. We may

have other students work on interpretive signs for the area as well," Prince said.

Prince has also been working with Chuck Boyer at Alcona High School and Brandon Beltz at Inland Lakes School along with three or four other schools to form a regional industrial arts collaborative. The collaborative will be a network for industrial arts teachers to get involved with things like the welding of gates to protect threatened species. "The gates are the first project through the Great Lakes Stewardship initiative that an industrial arts teacher has been involved in. The collaboration will help support the industrial art teachers by giving them a network which they can communicate back and forth in. These teachers have committed to incorporating place based education within their curriculum," Prince said.

Prince graduated from Alcona High School in 2008 before attending Lake Superior State University where she graduated last year. "It's great to be back in the area. When I was in high school I was very involved in the FFA. I was a chapter officer and regional officer and was in-

involved in the 4-H Junior Livestock Club and all sorts of stuff so it's nice to be back and give back to the community that has helped me so much," Prince said. She will be stationed at the school until her term ends next October.