

# Students Involved in Sustaining Their Arkansas

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## THE PROBLEM

Five students in Mountain Home, Arkansas saw a problem that needed fixing, but they couldn't do it on their own. My role is to be a mentor to them and make sure their project pieces are complete.

Mountain Home's problem: The local hiking trail, David's Trail, has severely decreased in popularity. It is the only close developed hiking trail for Mountain Home residents.

The solution: Renovate the trail and add artwork to make the trail a community gem and a place for people to enjoy nature and exercise outdoors.

## THE BACKGROUND

Students Involved in Sustaining Their Arkansas (SISTA) was started by Dr. David Jolliffe in 2014 after learning about the Environmental And Spatial Technologies (EAST) high school class and then revamping his Arkansas Delta Oral History Project program. Currently SISTA is in year two of its operation.

SISTA seeks to assist high school students as they create programs or projects that sustains or revitalizes their community.

For high school students, EAST is a student driven, project based class focused on professional development, technology use, and community problem solving.

SISTA sends emails to local schools with or without EAST programs. Students with projects or ideas for projects are encouraged to apply. From there, projects are chosen and a University of Arkansas student is partnered with the high school student, or students, spearheading the project.



## THE PROJECT

For this project my role was to be the mentor to five students attending Mountain Home High School. Through SISTA, the students have learned the importance of proper planning and how that creates quality work.

SISTA sent out the portions of this project they wanted the EAST kids to complete which included, an initial proposal, oral history, personnel, duties, timeline & schedule, financials, evaluation plan, and an executive summary, along with revisions.

After each section was completed, the students sent me their final copy where I would make corrections and give advice on how certain parts could be made better.

*"EAST has benefited me in many ways, most importantly in the fact that it teaches me to do and figure things out on my own. I love being able to do my own thing instead of a teacher telling me to do it because in the job world, or in college, a teacher won't be in charge of every little thing you do and helping you when a tiny problem arises. You have to learn to do things on your own."*

-Rowan, Mountain Home High School

## THE OUTCOME

According to their teacher, partnering with SISTA has taught the students to be more meticulous with the project planning and not just focusing on the end goal.

*"EAST and SISTA both have given me leadership opportunities this school year. I've learned a lot about myself and how to handle certain situations because of these programs. I'm more confident in speaking my mind now, which has changed my self-confidence and how I see myself."*

-Cameron, Mountain Home High School

The students have finished everything and have essentially written an entire grant proposal. We are currently in the revision stage before they turn in their final copy to Dr. David Jolliffe on May 15, 2016.

Once the proposal has been turned in, Dr. Jolliffe and Julia Paganelli will spend the summer going to different organizations and agencies seeking funding. Funding is not guaranteed, but they do approach local and state programs to find someone who would be willing to back the projects.

Should funding come through and more artwork donated, the students are hoping for a grand opening of the trail in the 2016-2017 school year.



## THE MISSION STATEMENT

*Students Involved in Sustaining Their Arkansas (SISTA) is a University of Arkansas program that helps high school students develop plans for projects that will revitalize and sustain a higher quality of life in towns throughout Arkansas.*

## SUSTAINABILITY

The definition of sustainability given to the high school students interested in partnering with SISTA is very broad and it is up to the student to interpret that and tailor their project in that way. SISTA starts with the high school students and a proposed project that revitalizes their home community and then partners them with University of Arkansas students also interested in sustainability. The high school students are told to develop and move forward with project planning with the resources they have.

Social systems:

- The trail project will be beneficial to the community of Mountain Home. Not only will the trail bring a community together, but also will give people a place to exercise outdoors and anyone who uses the trail will, hopefully, gain a better appreciation of the arts.
- SISTA brings together individuals to work as a group to accomplish the goal of enriching the communities in which they live in for years to come.

The SISTA program is very beneficial to not only high school students to learn real world project planning, but also to local communities who benefit from the projects that get developed and funded.