



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge *Refuge Partner Schools Program*



Connecting Young People with Nature

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge has initiated a new environmental education model that emphasizes long-term learning for students and their teachers. The *Refuge Partner Schools Program* is an approach that provides teachers and students with multidisciplinary, standard-based curriculum that includes hands-on, real-life experiences with plants and wildlife, as well as recreational opportunities to immerse students in nature throughout the seasons. The *Program* reaches a wide audience of students with an emphasis on urban youth.



Refuge Partner Schools Program Highlights

- Provides urban youth with meaningful outdoor experiences and opportunities for environmental learning.
- Delivers an educational rotation in which every student in grades K–5 visits the Refuge at least 3 times each school year.
- Offers hands-on opportunities for students to participate in real-life research and data collection that benefits Refuge plants and wildlife, increases environmental awareness and fosters a stewardship ethic.
- Provides students and teachers with high quality, multi-disciplinary curriculum-based fieldtrips as well as outdoor experiences like hiking, fishing, and wildlife observation that meet curriculum standards.
- Invites *Refuge Partner School* families to participate in their child's learning and experiences through chaperone opportunities, special events and family activities.



The Blue Goose Bus Fund

The number one teacher identified limitation to this *Program* is the transportation costs to Partner Schools. Despite the fact that Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge does not charge any participation fees, school budgets have left many schools unable to absorb busing costs. In response, the *Refuge Friends, Inc.*, a 501-C3 non profit organization, has established the **Blue Goose Bus Fund**. Schools that join the *Refuge Partner Schools Program* are eligible to apply for partial or total busing scholarship, provided funds are available.



For More Information

Suzanne Trapp, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Minnesota Valley NWR
Rapids Lake Education & Visitor Center
952-361-4502