

Wisconsin Land + Water
Conservation
Brad Matson Youth
Education Award
2022 Outstanding Youth
Educator Nomination

Justine Bula - Sauk County

Name, address and contact information (phone and email address, if available) of the nominee.

Justine Bula
505 Broadway
Baraboo, WI 53913
justine.bula@saukcountywi.gov
608-355-4842

Award category, county department name, title, and years of service of nominee.

Brad Matson Youth Education Award
2022 Outstanding Youth Educator Nomination
Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department
Education Coordinator
Employment Anniversary Date: 8/8/2018 = 3 years at 2022 WLWCA Conference

Name, address and contact information of the nominator.

Melissa Schlupp, Conservation Manager
Sauk County Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway
Baraboo, WI 53913
melissa.schlupp@saukcountywi.gov
608-355-4838

Lisa Wilson, Director
Sauk County Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway
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lisa.wilson@saukcountywi.gov
608-355-4830

Summarize your entry in five sentences or less

Although it may seem near impossible to make such a huge impact in just over three years; however, Justine Bula has completely redefined how youth education is delivered in Sauk County. She came into a position with a lot of stagnant programming and made big, risky changes to create the well-organized and structured program that is represented in Sauk County today. Justine saw a need for more youth education programming, specifically lessons that are aligned with Next Generation Science Standards and worked endlessly to make it available to all school districts in the county. She expanded the list of partners the department collaborates with to provide even greater opportunities for new programming for both youth and adult conservation education. Justine is well on her way to becoming a highly respected local, regional, and statewide youth educator.

Tell us in 500 words or less how the nominee meets the award criteria and guidelines.

Justine is responsible for all youth education programming being administered by the Sauk County LRE Department. When Justine started in 2018, she quickly realized the youth conservation days program that had been offered in the past was not effective and lacked engagement by students and interest from the presenters. She contacted Upham Woods to explore opportunities to utilize their outdoor learning center and trained conservation education professionals to deliver structured, yet enjoyable learning experiences for these students. We've hosted two events at the center, and it has been well received by the school districts and Upham Woods staff.

In 2019, Justine worked with local school districts to incorporate Wheat Week into 4th and 5th grade classrooms. Wheat Week is a series of five lessons, delivered over the course of one week, educating students about water, soil, energy systems, and wheat as well as how they impact our daily lives. In the first year alone, six schools and 384 students participated in the program. She is an active member of the Baraboo School District Agriculture Advisory Committee providing guidance on current and future agriculture education.

Justine has established excellent partnerships with local school districts allowing her to easily expand participation in the NACD conservation poster contest. Prior to Justine's arrival, Sauk County rarely participated in the poster contest. However, in 2021 there were a total of 63 poster entries from nine schools with two posters advancing to the state competition. Justine is also a member of the Wisconsin Land + Water Youth Education Committee and coordinates the regional poster and speaking contests for the Southern Area Association.

Justine also coordinates the Clean Sweep and Ag Plastics collection programs. Her resourceful thinking has resulted in a more efficient clean sweep collection process by minimizing the types of items accepted and offering a voucher program in collaboration with Dane County Clean Sweep Facility. In 2021, Justine offered a pilot program through Revolutions Plastics utilizing Recapture bags and eliminating the hauling costs associated with the normal Ag Plastics collection program. Justine's creative personality is just one of the many reasons she is such an invaluable resource here in Sauk County.

The Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) is a producer led watershed group in Sauk County that is closely managed by Justine. She assists with all aspects of the group including grant administration and implementation including cost share programs and outreach events. She expanded SSWIG's reach far beyond Sauk County by working regionally and statewide with other groups to coordinate field days and other promotional materials. As you'll see by their letter of support, SSWIG is enthusiastic to have Justine as a collaborator.

Justine's positive attitude is contagious, and we feel fortunate to have her on our team. She thrives at offering innovative and creative ways to deliver the programs she manages. She is one of the most dedicated colleagues I have had the pleasure of working with and is more than worthy to be nominated as the 2022 Outstanding Youth Educator.



Justine presenting poster contest awards

[NACD Poster Contest promotional video Justine produced to reach students during COVID](#)

[Baraboo 8th Grade Career Day promotional video Justine produced to reach students during COVID](#)



Justine using the Enviroscape to teach students about runoff and watersheds



Justine has been the backbone of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) since their inception in 2019 (Photo above: SSWIG Committee members in 2020).

[SSWIG Promotional video Justine coordinated](#)



Justine was instrumental in coordinating successful Conserve Sauk Film Festivals in 2019 and 2021.

Cooperative Extension
637 Extension Building
432 North Lake Street
Madison, WI 53706-1498
608-263-1095
608-265-4600 (fax)
711 for Wisconsin Relay



Dear Review Committee,

I would like to extend my enthusiastic support for Justine Bula's application. Justine is a committed educator, an innovative collaborator and a strategic leader. I know Justine's work in conservation education through time we both were working on projects at Upham Woods and Sauk County Conservation Days. I most recently worked with Justine through our conservation program that we host at the University of Wisconsin-Extension and teamed up with her specifically to lead implementation of project deliverables. The positive addition of Justine's leadership to projects and the existing efforts in our program cannot be overstated. Community oriented science education and outreach activities require precisely the type of passion she brings to our team as we seek to engage youth into STEM and environment science specifically.

Justine is a talented problem solver and motivated educator. I have personally observed her leadership and her instruction in the context of working on our projects. In my research, I specialize in the enhanced impacts of education and outreach as it pertains to active research projects in environmental science. More broadly, this contributes to education for sustainability through the improved use of technology in education. This includes web-based media that blends research activities with classroom curricular content. Opportunities such as those are excellent entry points for students and educators to build more complete and global content around energy, food, and water issues in sustainability education. Through her role as collaborator on our projects, Justine has a demonstrated track record of self-directed project management and effective curricular enhancements for communicating environmental science, I have no doubt that her impact on other organizations are just as significant.

I enthusiastically support Justine's application for this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Justin Hougham', written in a cursive style.

R. Justin Hougham, Ph.D.
University Wisconsin- Extension
Associate Professor, Environmental Education Specialist
Director- Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

12/3/2021

Wisconsin Land+Water
131 West Wilson Street, Suite 601
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Selection Committee:

I am writing in enthusiastic support of Justine Bula's nomination for the Brad Matson Youth Education Award. I first met Justine through her coordination of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG). I have observed her dedication to connecting agricultural producers with resources and information to advance the sustainability of their farm operations, and appreciate her willingness to connect the research community with producer questions and research needs.

It was only after meeting Justine in her role with SSWIG that I realized she was the same person who has been visiting our local elementary school. Her dynamic in-class lessons about soil health, agriculture, and land stewardship made an impact on my own children (ages 8 and 11). Their enthusiasm for "wheat week" and subsequent stories about the importance of cover crops for soil health and water quality demonstrated the impact of Justine's engagement with local schools. She has a natural talent for inspiring children and adults alike to think critically about land stewardship, and envision new possibilities for sustainable agricultural systems.

Developing more resilient agricultural communities requires dedicated local leaders who can inspire people of all ages, and bring us together in common purpose. Justine has already made a significant impact through her work in Sauk County, and our community benefits from her leadership in so many ways. Justine is an exemplary candidate for the Brad Matson Youth Education Award.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alison Duff
Research Ecologist
US Dairy Forage Research Center
alison.duff@usda.gov

U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center
1925 Linden Dr.
Madison, WI 53706
608-890-0050

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Leah Brownell
Physical Education Teacher and Garden Club Supervisor
Al Behrman Elementary School
400 Mulberry Street
Baraboo, WI 53912
labrownell@barabooschools.net

To whom it may concern,

I am the physical education teacher at Al Behrman Elementary School. During the Summer/Fall of 2020, I began planning for a school garden, as well as an after school club for 4th and 5th graders. Justine Bula was recommended to me by someone familiar with the work she had previously done with students at our school.

Justine played an integral role in planning and creating our school garden space. She helped create a timeline of activities for the students and facilitated them each week. She brought new and exciting information to students, with many hands-on activities. She has a way of getting students excited about nature, the environment and gardening.

Justine is more than worthy of the 2022 Outstanding Youth Educator Award. Her passion for teaching young people the importance of environmental awareness, conservation and more shines through everything she does. We are so fortunate to have her working with students at Al Behrman Elementary School.

Leah Brownell



Baraboo High School

Glenn Bildsten, *Principal* • Clint Brickl, *Associate Principal*

Brian Visger, *Associate Principal*

1201 Draper Street • Baraboo, WI 53913

Phone (608) 355-3940 • Fax (608) 355-3962

Nov. 1, 2021

Wisconsin Land+Water
131 West Wilson Street, Suite 601
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Selection Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Justine Bula's nomination for the Brad Matson Youth Education Award for 2022. Justine has been an amazing source of support for land resources and environment education in Sauk county. I have had the pleasure of collaborating with Justine for three years in my position as science teacher at both Reedsburg Area High School and Baraboo High School. She has served as a guest speaker for three classes I teach, including Biology, Earth Science, and Environmental Science, as well as at the Baraboo High School Eco Club's Natural Resource Professionals Career Exploration Day. She has also been instrumental in coordinating county wide projects, such as the "Conserve Sauk" Conservation Film Festival, NACD Conservation Poster Contest, and the Wisconsin Envirothon.

Justine is extremely hard working, passionate, outgoing, personable, and open to working with a wide variety of audiences. I have seen her interact with students at all levels of high school, and she is equally engaging with and well received by all of them. She facilitated multiple discussions with my Reedsburg Area High School Environmental Science and Earth Science classes on nonpoint source pollution, bringing in and facilitating engagement with the Enviroscope Model so students could simulate the impact of erosion mitigation strategies on soil retention and water quality. She met my Environmental Science students at the Hartje Nature Center and School Forest, where she helped us collect both chemical and biological data on the Hartje Creek and pond. She also served as a guest speaker at Parfrey's Glen State Natural Area for the Baraboo High School Eco Club as part of the Natural Resource Professionals Career Exploration Day. She spoke to club members about her role as a natural resource educator with Sauk county, and then assisted students with collecting and identifying biological samples from the creek.

In short, Justine has been a true asset to natural resource education in Sauk county. I am thrilled to be able to work with her now and in the future and delighted to nominate her for the 2022 Outstanding Youth Educator award. Please feel free to contact me at aworkman@barabooschools.net or 608-355-3940 x 2123 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Amy Workman
Biology, Anatomy, Biotechnology Teacher

November 18, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

We, the group Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SWIGG), wish to enthusiastically support the nomination of Justine Bula as Conservation Educator of the Year. She has been instrumental in founding our watershed group. She saw a need and a way to bring us together to make real change.

She grew the local support by approaching farmers within the watershed and developing relationships with them. She involved UW Extension, US Dairy Forage Research Center, River Alliance of Wisconsin, The Aldo Leopold Foundation, Pheasants Forever and The Farmer Angel Network as our group grew.

She has a vision and has helped us form our vision. We realize that the creation of this group was not a part of her job description, but she took this on and ran with it. She has been a driving force for promoting conservation within our community. She has worked to bring in speakers that are nationally recognized, and then worked tirelessly to bring in farmers to hear them speak. Her efforts have worked to foster real change and create a willingness to experiment and try new things that break the mold of traditional farming. She has encouraged us to try to think outside the box and try new practices. The farmers that she works with are drawn in and encouraged to succeed.

She has worked long hours to successfully write the grants that have allowed us to succeed in promoting the adoption of a wide range of regenerative practices. She works to support pasture walks, field days and workshops that are invaluable to the conservation movement in and beyond our community. Her efforts are far reaching. She has drawn interest from the broader community and worked to educate the non-farming community as well. Justine Bula is more than deserving of this award.

Roger Bindl

Ron Schoepp

Darren Yanke

Dale Gasser

Ron Bula

Ron Bula



December 6, 2021

Wisconsin Land+Water
131 West Wilson Street, Suite 601
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Selection Committee:

I am delighted to write this letter in support of Justine Bula's nomination for the Brad Matson Youth Education Award for 2022. While I have not worked directly with her on youth education projects, Justine and I have worked together at the nexus of conservation and agriculture on a number of projects. Justine brings innovation and her own youthful enthusiasm to natural resource education.

Grassland 2.0 is a multi-state project based at the University of Wisconsin that seeks to build linkages between conservation and agriculture, between farmers and consumers, and between the arts and sciences with the goal of moving us toward a food and farming system that delivers clean water, healthy soil, biodiversity, and delicious, nutrient-dense food. In my role as outreach coordinator for Grassland 2.0, I've had the pleasure of partnering with Justine on development of written outreach materials as well as on planning and carrying out workshops and activities for the general public. She is an excellent communicator and able to translate science into formats that are accessible to people of all ages and walks of life.

With less than 1% of the population engaged in farming, communicating about both conservation and regenerative agriculture--especially to the next generation--is critical for addressing the serious challenges our planet faces. It's people like Justine, who have a passion for conservation and education and the skills to communicate effectively, that can make the biggest difference!

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support for Justine Bula for the 2022 Outstanding Youth Educator award. Please let me know if you have any questions for me. My contact information is below.

Kindest regards,

Laura Paine
Outreach Coordinator, Grassland 2.0
608-338-9039
lkpaine@wisc.edu
<https://grasslandag.org>



To the Award Committee,

I am writing on behalf of River Alliance of Wisconsin and myself, as Director of River Alliance's Clear Water Farms Program, to recommend Justine Bula for the Brad Matson 2022 Outstanding Youth Educator Award. I have worked with Justine through our participation in the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG). She is an exceptionally talented conservation educator who stands out for her creativity, patience, commitment, and enthusiasm. I strongly recommend her for the 2022 award.

River Alliance maintains the network of lake and river associations throughout Wisconsin. There are hundreds of these and they're almost all volunteer—coordinated and led by people who are passionate not just about conservation but about sharing this enthusiasm with others. Through the Clear Water Farms program, we engage producer-led watershed groups to provide them with the same support that we provide our other watershed groups. This is new territory for us. Finding partners who are as welcoming and collaborative as Justine is critical to our success. Through Justine, we have built strong relationships with the conservation farmers in Sauk County, who have invited River Alliance to join their Advisory Council as the first non-farm organization in the group. We simply could not have done this without her.

Justine knows that the survival and success of groups like SSWIG depends on a broad base of support from organizations that can extend the group's resources and reach. She provides hands on guidance and administrative capacity for SSWIG, which is enthusiastic but new to creating an organization. We have been able to supplement this by providing training, communications, and logistical support for the group as it grows and formalizes, which was part of Justine's vision as well as our own. It speaks to her creativity and boldness of vision that she could see this was needed and to act on it. It speaks to her extraordinary temperament that we have been welcomed so readily by the group.

Truly excellent conservation education professionals don't just educate others, they build systems and institutions that do this in perpetuity, and with greater impact than a single person can provide. I think this is a part of what's so unique about Justine. She is an organizer and institution builder. She has been working with local schools to make sure that future farmers see conservation as just the way that farming is done, not some new and unusual change. Her efforts to support the transformation of the County Farm into an education center, to bring youth into SSWIG's events, and to re-imagine youth agriculture programming are bold moves that will pay real dividends for both Wisconsin's kids and our land.

I suspect Justine will be a leading voice in conservation education throughout her career, and we strongly support recognizing that with the Brad Matson award.

Best Regards,

Michael Tiboris
Director, Clear Water Farms Program
River Alliance of Wisconsin
mtiboris@wisconsinrivers.org
(619) 804-7555