

# Riley Sanders

## TEEA 2015 Winner: Youth



*Boy Scout contributes to revitalization efforts through East Austin middle school project.*

In a community in Northeast Austin, an Eagle Scout from Central Texas once again showed a commitment to environmental leadership. Riley Sanders, a Boy Scout with Troop 17 in Austin, was inspired to focus on watershed health and public education during his multi-year project. Riley's project was actually incorporated into a larger scope of work through a city initiative known as "Restore Rundberg"—a neighborhood-driven effort in which partnerships between the residents and community, government, higher education, and public safety groups work to revitalize this corridor of East Austin.

The project spanned spring 2013 and 2014. To manage runoff from the school's impervious surfaces, Riley began the project by coordinating the trenching for the rain garden and installation of grating-system and drainage lines as well as the reinforcement of the walls of the rain garden. In the months following that phase, Riley rallied an impressive group of more than 100 volunteers, including peers from within the Boy Scouts, Dobie Middle School students, and faculty as well as volunteers from the community to come together for the planting and beautification of the rain garden. With the interest and support he witnessed, Riley even expanded his work to include plantings that would enhance student congregation and rest areas at the school's entrance.

With no funding available directly from Dobie Middle School, Riley went to great efforts to raise more than \$14,000 in in-kind donations for the project. In addition to services and products donated, the rain garden project also raised over \$2,000 through the North Austin Garden Tour. Through Riley's fundraising, all project costs were covered completely, giving the staff and students at Dobie Middle School and the community a beautiful and environmentally beneficial addition to their area.

After completion of the rain garden, Riley worked with the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department to install a bilingual educational sign to explain the purpose and benefits of the system. Finally, by offering general information on rain gardens for the teachers to supplement the math and science curriculum, Riley brought enhanced and practical learning opportunities to Dobie students.

As an organization, the Boy Scouts of America has consistently developed leaders in the environmental and public service arenas. Through his hard work and passion for improving the environment and the lives of others, Riley Sanders joined the elite ranks of those youth who stand out from their peers in making a lasting difference.