

The Sleepy Eye YES! Team participated in the state wide judging on May 19th. The team used a slide presentation through a ZOOM meeting with five state judges and regional directors and coordinators of Youth Eco Solutions. The judges determined that the Sleepy Eye YES! Team would be awarded a tie for 2nd place with Mankato West. Westbrook Walnut Grove was awarded first place. Six teams competed at the state level this year. The teams receive a monetary award and state plaque.

“The judges congratulated our team for our efforts and resilience through a challenging year. They were impressed by team enthusiasm and commitment to ongoing action projects and representing our schools and community. They felt the team is continuing to serve as a strong role model for youth and all citizens.” (Deb Reinarts quote from summary of judges’ comments sent to us)

The team was noted for expanding environmental stewardship across generations and continuing to find additional business owners, farmers, and citizens in Sleepy Eye and surrounding communities to connect with for projects and education.

This year, the YES! Team had to adapt to the impact of the pandemic, but was still able to hold the annual “Recycle Your Holidays” collection with 1117 pounds of lights collected, the largest ever. The team partnered with Sleepy Eye Lights in Motion in getting Sportsman’s Park ready for the drive through display. Increased recycling efforts at SEPS cafeteria took place with installing a separation station for plastic, cardboard, milk cartons, and organics. Educational opportunities through virtual fall and winter summits included MN climate change issues and more. St. Mary’s team members made “plarn” (made out of braided recycled plastic bags) mats for the homeless. The SEPS team members met with Fischer Sleepy Bison Acres to initiate organics collection and education to share with the student body regarding regenerative farming for healthy soil, healthy animals, and healthy people. A variety of Earth Week activities from pre-school to 6th grade took place at both SEPS and St. Mary’s, and collection of prairie forb and grass seeds from the golf course and Ross Park sites were dispersed in two locations in Sleepy Eye. The team is still involved with the “Friends of the Minnesota River Valley” Program and collects water quality data on the Cottonwood River.