



Groundwork Profiles

Favian Gutierrez

“Can I smile for the camera?” he asked. Of course! Favian Gutierrez set his wheelbarrow down for a photo and smiled for the camera. The 16-year-old from Richmond, California, spent the morning working with a crew rehabbing tent pads at Tower Campground within Yellowstone National Park. He was there as part of a collaboration between the National Park Service and Groundwork USA, an organization founded by the Park Service and the EPA that works on urban greening projects. “My cousin got me involved in Groundwork Richmond [pictured above],” Gutierrez said. “And I can’t believe that after a month I’m here in Yellowstone.”

Gutierrez is unusual among most urban youth. His family back in Richmond, California, had taken him camping in Yosemite and to see the towering redwoods in Muir Woods National Monument. “My parents wanted us kids to be outdoor people and have fun in nature,” he explained. “But most of that involved being outside and playing soccer.” Now, Gutierrez is part of a corps that includes 20 other youth from across the nation for a week-long service trip to Yellowstone.

Groundwork, which helps local communities with urban greening projects and brownfield reclamation, also hires local high school youth through its Green

GWUSA worked with Judy Knuth Folts and Bob Fuhrmann at Yellowstone National Park (YNP) to create an opportunity for Groundwork youth to work at the Park. In addition to the extensive amount of work the youth do back in their hometowns, they get to spend a week working at YNP with Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) staff. This helps the youth connect their efforts at home to broader conservation efforts across America.

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Team program to accomplish a range of environmental restoration projects in their respective communities. As part of Groundwork’s approach, youth also work with federal partners on public lands so that they see the connection between their environmental work at home and broader conservation efforts across the country.

So how does he like Yellowstone so far? “Great!” says Favian, adding “no words can adequately describe what it’s like to be here. I mean here I am in America’s first park—the world’s first park.” He continued, “Before I came here I watched a lot of YouTube videos about Yellowstone and what most amazed me was how blue the water was.” He explained how excited he was to tour the park the next day and was looking forward to learning as much as he could.

The collaboration between the National Park Service (NPS) and Groundwork USA is now in its fourth year. The partnership was fostered by George McDonald, the Youth Programs Manager for NPS and developed by Judy Knuth Folts, Deputy Chief of Resource Education and Youth Programs,

and Bob Fuhrmann, Youth Programs Manager for Yellowstone National Park. In the last four years, 175 youth from 23 Groundwork communities have traveled to the park for a week of working, playing, learning and growth – the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) model.

Gutierrez proudly displayed his work uniform with its Groundwork and “Find Your Park” logo, a celebration of the coming 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. “I feel so professional in it,” he said. Asked why he wanted to come to Yellowstone, Gutierrez connected his current opportunities with what the future might hold. Eventually, he wants to study law to help families and children and thought that getting involved in service was important in that path. But for now, he was loving the whole experience at Yellowstone National Park, and felt proud to help it through the week of service. Asked what he hoped to see while in the park, he picked up his wheelbarrow and shouted, “Everything, I’m ready for it all!”

DEDICATED TO CHANGING PLACES AND CHANGING LIVES, GROUNDWORK USA, DEVELOPED WITH NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SUPPORT, IS A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION WITH LOCAL ROOTS, WORKING TO REVITALIZE NEIGHBORHOODS AND TRANSFORM COMMUNITY LIABILITIES INTO ASSETS.

