



Groundwork Profiles

Jeremiah Roy

There were many things that Jeremiah Roy, 17, never thought he'd do: graduate high school, go to college, or present results from a scientific study. Stepping onto the grounds of Grand Teton National Park was another thing he never thought he'd do back in the eighth grade, when he began his work with Groundwork New Orleans. Now, as a recent high school graduate, he is experiencing the backcountry of Wyoming.

"Here, the view is spectacular," Jeremiah says about the Grand Tetons. The Groundwork team, made up of youth from Groundwork Trusts across the country, is working on making a road more accessible for seniors and handicapped people. They are also learning how to build trails – a skill that will be important to Jeremiah's work on a project blazing new trails on a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service refuge, Bayou Sauvage, and at Barataria Preserve at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve in New Orleans, when he gets back home from the Grand Tetons.

Jeremiah's proudest moment in the past five years with Groundwork New Orleans (GWNOLA) came when he helped complete the restoration of the swamp Bayou Bienvenue along Caffin Avenue.

"There was so much dead stuff and algae everywhere. Groundwork came in with

JEREMIAH, who just graduated from high school, is pictured above at Grand Tetons and at home in New Orleans. He has been with GWNOLA since 8th grade, and is one of the original Green Team members!

volunteers and planted bulrush and other native plants," he explains. The Green Team hoped to decrease pH levels and plant native species to combat the algal bloom. Jeremiah and the rest of the Green Team presented the results of their restoration project to the Sewage and Water Board in New Orleans.



One of the hardest projects he has worked on with the Green Team was removing Chinese callow, an invasive species outcompeting native swamp vegetation. It was very frustrating because the team had to keep "going back to the drawing board at least three times to find out the best chemical solution to use." They would come back every few months only to find that the plant had grown back.

Here in the Grand Tetons, the Groundwork crew is working on similar projects. "The hardest was taking out the thistle because there is so much of it and the thorns are long and sharp," said Jeremiah. At Grand Tetons, the corps only used tools and hard labor to remove it all. Throughout this week, amidst the beautiful mountains, Jeremiah and the crew of Groundwork youth from across the country have learned to work together and tackle problems as a team using the various skills they bring from their individual Trusts.

"Groundwork has been there for me and been an opportunity for me and my friends to avoid being on the streets," Jeremiah says. "It gives us something to look forward to."

Even though he never thought he'd make it to college, with his experiences at Groundwork he now has plans to attend Southeastern Louisiana University as a business major and even has goals of becoming the Executive Director of Groundwork USA someday! Experiencing the Grand Tetons with his Groundwork colleagues this summer feels like a great start to that journey.

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.

