



Groundwork Profiles

Medina Gedi

Medina Gedi paused from limbing a log to gaze at the ridge above her. Yellowstone National Park expanded before her, an alpine vista that never fails to leave an impression. “Yeah, this is my second time at Yellowstone National Park,” Gedi commented. She searched for words to describe her overall experience at Yellowstone. “I was just so amazed with this place. And not just with the beauty—it’s the people, the staff at YCC [Yellowstone’s Youth Conservation Corps] that make this such a special place.”

Medina is part of Groundwork USA’s Yellowstone Corps Experience, an opportunity for urban youth involved in various restoration projects in cities across the US to spend a week working with the National Park Service (NPS) on projects benefitting Yellowstone.

Despite knowing the hard week of work that awaited her at Yellowstone, Gedi jumped at the opportunity to return to the Park. “I just want to see more of this,” she said, sweeping her hand over that view that continues to enthrall her.

Groundwork USA was founded through a collaboration between NPS and the Environmental Protection Agency. Its purpose is to work closely with communities on urban greening and brownfield remediation projects. Local high school youth are hired and trained to work directly with Groundwork staff through the Green Team program. They are an integral part of the

Interviewed by Curt Collier, GWUSA; Editing: Pamela Segura, GW Hudson Valley & design: Le’alani Schaumberg, NPS. And a big thank you to Medina Gedi of Groundwork Portland! August 2015

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.

“THIS WORK AT YELLOWSTONE HELPS YOU...AS MUCH AS IT HELPS THE PARK”

conservation progress.

“I got excited about being outdoors in middle school,” Gedi explained. “I loved gardening so much that my mother searched for a program where I could continue to do that. She found Groundwork Portland (and the Green Team, pictured above left) that had a lot of community gardening projects and I interviewed with them and got the job.”

Gedi has since built pathways, worked with elementary students learning about the environment, and built community gardens as part of her work at Groundwork. She has also joined various parks in the Portland area in the fight against invasives. “My grandmother always used to say that being in nature calmed people down. That’s certainly true,” Gedi reflected. “But you learn so much by being here. I learn things I can take back home to teach others.”

Medina hopes one day to study environmental science in college—and she’ll continue to use her experiences at Yellowstone National Park as a great teacher. “Every time I come here I add to my knowledge base. I also learn to be a better advocate for nature.”

This summer, 60 diverse youth from 18 inner-

cities across the United States where Groundwork has an office will spend time in the park. Now in its fourth season, the collaboration between Groundwork USA and Yellowstone National Park was developed by Judy Knuth Folts, Deputy Chief for the Division of Resource Education and Youth Programs at Yellowstone, and Curt Collier, the National Youth Programs Director of Groundwork USA. The program is funded chiefly by the National Park Service.

This week at Yellowstone gives the youth a unique opportunity to see their conservation work in cities connected to the nationwide environmental movement. They are also able to expand their awareness of conservation jobs within the Park Service. The experience, of course, gives the youth the resume that leads to those conversation jobs.

And while that is certainly true for her, the most important thing is just being back in Yellowstone National Park. “I’m so thankful to be here,” she said. “This work helps you, as much as it helps the park.” And with that, she picked up her ax and continued shaping the bumper log before her.

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.

