



# Groundwork USA Network's Youth Programs 2014-'15



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## Cover photo

The cover photo is of Groundwork Denver’s 2014 Green Team members, at Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in Colorado.

*Groundwork Denver is part of the Groundwork USA network. Groundwork USA is a national organization with local roots, engaging local businesses, residents, youth, and government officials to revitalize neighborhoods and transform community liabilities into community assets. Dedicated to the belief that by changing places, we can change lives, we transform blighted communities for the long term, working hand-in-hand with our network of 22 local Trusts across the country.*

## Overview

Groundwork Trusts lead place-based transformations in underserved communities coupled with an investment in the development of people – youth, in particular. Trusts across the Groundwork USA network provide local youth with environmental stewardship, educational, employment and leadership opportunities.

All Groundwork Trusts operate some sort of youth programming. In 2014 alone, Groundwork Trusts engaged 18,731 young people (primarily of minority descent) in volunteer activities to restore environmental conditions in 19 low-income, urban communities. That year, our Trusts

provided 309 paid conservation jobs (including full-time, summer and part-time, and internships), worked with 343 schools, and completed leadership and skills training for 1,310 youth. In 2014-'15, Groundwork also expanded existing partnerships and established many new ones with National Parks both locally and nationally. Through these collaborations, our youth were able to access and benefit from many more opportunities in job skills training, environmental education, and recreational and leadership development programs. In fact 2015 marked a new milestone for Groundwork USA in the scope, intensity, and expansion of youth programming. With the National Parks alone we collectively engaged 46 youth leaders (mostly ages 20 to 25 years), and over 200 youth (ages 14 to 19 years) at 25 different sites under the National Park Service's jurisdiction—described below. *See Appendix 1 for details on Trusts' projects at these sites.*

- Barataria Preserve (GW New Orleans)
- French Quarter Visitor Center (GW New Orleans)
- Grand Tetons National Park (GW USA)
- Yellowstone National Park (GW USA)
- Pt. Reyes National Seashore (GW Richmond)
- Morristown National Historic Site (GW Elizabeth)
- Shenandoah National Park (GW USA)
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail (GW Hudson Valley)
- Rocky Mountain National Park (GW Denver)
- Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area (GW Somerville)
- Minuteman National Historic Site (GW Somerville)
- Longfellow House (GW Somerville)
- Olmstead House (GW Somerville)
- Kennedy Birthplace (GW Somerville)
- Adams National Park (GW Somerville)
- Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (GW Somerville)
- Richmond National Battlefield Park (GW Richmond VA)
- Maggie L. Walker National Historical Site (GW Richmond VA)
- Ft. Dupont National Historic Site (GW Anacostia River DC)
- Kenilworth Park (GW Anacostia River DC)
- Fort Carolina National Memorial (GW Jacksonville)
- Jacob Riis National Park (GW Hudson Valley)
- Sandy Hook National Recreation Area (GW Hudson Valley)
- Gateway National Recreation Area (Jamaica Bay (GW Hudson Valley)
- Fire Island National Seashore (GW Hudson Valley)
- Weir Farm National Historic Site (GW Bridgeport)

Groundwork Trusts consider their youth programming to be an investment in the future of their communities and their young people, engaging them in age-appropriate, hands-on work to transform their environment, expose them to national parks and public lands, raise awareness about critical issues facing our communities, and nurture civic engagement. By offering quality experiential leadership experiences for young people, many of whom are low-income, our Trusts are both investing in places and in people—and creating a legacy of next generation Groundwork-ers!

## Investing in the Future: Early Childhood to Career

Groundwork aims to introduce young people to the natural world at an early age and to continue to deepen this engagement in age appropriate ways through their teen and young adult years.

Across the network, Groundwork youth programs target three main age groups: ages 4 to 14 years (prioritize exposure to and exploration of environmental concepts), ages 14 to 18 years (provide opportunities for stewardship, leadership and job training in conservation), and ages 18 to 25 years (offer intensely focused job training programs that build employment readiness skills).

## Environmental Education with Children (Ages 4 – 14)

Several Groundwork Trusts work with school aged children and offer creative in- and after-school programming that is age-appropriate and tied to curricular standards set at the state level. Learning opportunities for this age group demonstrate the scientific method, reinforce science and math curricular work with hands-on activities, and provide minimally-programmed exploratory activities in natural settings. Below are some examples of Trusts' programs:

### GROUNDWORK CINCINNATI

#### *Education in Local Schools*

Groundwork Cincinnati-Mill Creek (GWC) collaborates with local businesses in the watershed



and other partners to sponsor an environmental education program in 29 schools within the Mill Creek watershed. In FY2014, GWC engaged over 3,800 students in over 150 environmental education activities with the help of 1,013 adult volunteers who contributed over 9,700 hours of volunteer service to GWC programming.

GWC's interdisciplinary program incorporates history, social studies, mathematics, geology, telecommunications, biology, chemistry, earth

sciences, and language arts. GWC's innovative approach to environmental education emphasizes both analytical and creative thinking and uses an action research model (data collection, problem-solving and action-taking) to collect and use information.

### GROUNDWORK ELIZABETH

#### *Come Grow With Us*

Groundwork Elizabeth continued their *Come Grow with Us* urban agricultural program, in partnership with local colleges and community organizations. 2014 brought a key partnership between Kean University and Groundwork Elizabeth (GWE) that now provides the farming curriculum and educational opportunities to the community. This program also offered produce for local farmer's markets and farm-to-table restaurants, and food as donations to local food

pantries and homeless shelters. GWE has also had great successes with younger participants through this program.



In 2014 and 2015, GWE worked with the Gateway YMCA, the Elizabethport Presbyterian Center, Jefferson Park Preschool, and Oasis Daycamp, reaching over 200 children from ages 4 to 14 – either at select community gardens or at the Kean University Urban Farm at Liberty Hall. Children helped plant seedlings, water, watch produce grow, and tasted foods picked immediately from raised beds or from the Historic Urban Farm.

## **GROUNDWORK SAN DIEGO**

### ***EARTH LAB***

Groundwork San Diego-Chollas Creek (GWSD) is now in its third year running EarthLab. A hands-on learning center and outdoor classroom, the EarthLab will continue to integrate environmental awareness and education among the schools, families, and communities located throughout southeastern San Diego. Located at Millennial Tech Middle School, the EarthLab not only educates students through experiential-based conservation science, but also provides a safe route to school through beautiful trails adorned with local art. It is also serving as a hub for the community, schools, and civic groups through information sharing. In 2014, the EarthLab was named a University of California Community Station, which is a place-based effort to connect the university to the community, linking commonly defined goals via teaching, research and service missions. Through collaboration and dedication, the EarthLab exemplifies how the southeastern San Diego community is coming together to bring art, sustainability, and vibrancy back to the Chollas Creek Watershed.

### **The Green Team (Ages 14 – 18)**

Over the past decade, Groundwork affiliates nationwide have collectively developed a model youth conservation program called the Green Team, which works with over 200 youth ages 14 to 18 each year. It is a paid, neighborhood-based conservation leadership program that works with intentionally small groups of 10 to 15 carefully selected youth at each Trust site. The Green Team is characterized by the following principles:

- In-depth, high quality, hands-on experiences for local youth in their community and on public lands
- Strong emphasis on group interaction, peer cohesion, and mutual accountability
- Teaching youth while reinforcing the reasons why their work is relevant
- Fostering environmental identity formation
- Providing advanced work opportunities and career path awareness

Green Team members also complete community service hours through other programs such as maintaining parks and trails developed by Groundwork Trusts, mentoring youth in schoolyard gardening programs, coordinating river cleanups and recruiting their peers as volunteers, etc.

Some Green Teams differ in structure somewhat from this model. A few are more school-based, and some are tied to specific programs, as you will see below. Trained youth leaders oversee these high-school aged youth in each location, and these youth leaders and emerging youth leaders are invited to represent their Green Teams at Groundwork USA's Annual Youth Summit. See some fun photos from Groundwork USA's 2015 Youth Summit which took place at YMCA of the Rockies, Colorado, from October 21 to 25 – where the youth had an opportunity to hike in Rocky Mountain National Park.



Below are snapshots from Trusts across the country that offer a window into the breadth of programs and projects that Green Team youth work on. These snapshots are not designed to cover or describe all the activities that each Green Team embarks on, which are extensive. These are examples of the types of creative and inter-disciplinary programs Green Team youth experience across the Groundwork network.

## **GROUNDWORK HUDSON VALLEY**

### ***Green Team***

Groundwork Hudson Valley, based in Yonkers, New York, hires local teenagers for environmental jobs throughout the year. For many, this is their first real job. Skill-building and hard work is tempered by amazing adventures that inspire and change these kids forever. In 2015, Green Team youth restored national parks damaged by Hurricane Sandy (Jacob Riis National Park, Sandy Hook National Recreation Area, Gateway National Recreation Area, and Fire Island National Seashore), built new parks along the Saw Mill River in Yonkers, New York, ran Groundwork Hudson Valley's farmers' market, and helped restore acres of habitat at Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge.

At right are Green Team members building osprey poles to provide nesting places for birds of prey, after many trees and the birds' habitats were destroyed by Hurricane Sandy.



## **GROUNDWORK ANACOSTIA RIVER, D.C.**

### ***Green Team***

In 2015, Green Team high-schoolers from southeastern Washington, D.C. joined their peers and the Smithsonian Institute in cataloguing mammals in urban parks in the mid-Atlantic region in a project called eMammal. The project was a partnership between the Smithsonian and North Carolina State University utilizing citizen scientists to collect photographs using hidden infrared cameras of mammals in natural and urban environments. Researchers are using the information that GWARDC and other students across several states collect to think about abundance and distribution of mammals. In participating in eMammal, Green Team members learned about habitats, ecosystems and the lifestyles of common mammals they picked up on their cameras. This project emphasized a partnership between educators and scientists whilst encouraging citizen science.

## **GROUNDWORK DALLAS**

### ***ECO-WILDERNESS CLASSROOM***

In 2014 and '15 Groundwork Dallas continued to build on the Eco-Wilderness Classroom located within the Elm Fork Green Belt of the Trinity River. This area is connected to the Great Trinity Forest in Dallas, Texas, by the Trinity River and is an urban wilderness area. The Classroom aims to provide high-school aged youth with vocational training on all types of outdoor and environmental education, including trail maintenance, interpretation, invasive species monitoring and mountain bike safety and skills.

The Classroom is funded in part by an EPA grant, in partnership with the City of Dallas, Building Community WORKSHOP (a community design center), and Southwest Airlines. Groundwork Dallas has also involved local community colleges, four-year universities, and junior colleges, in addition to Dallas area high-schools, and through the Eco-Wilderness Classroom plans to bring together the community for greater opportunities in networking and education.

## **GROUNDWORK RVA**

### ***URBAN ARCHAEOLOGY CORPS***

After three successful years in Washington D.C., the Urban Archaeology Corps (UAC) model was brought to Richmond, Virginia under a similar partnership between the National Park Service and Groundwork RVA. In its inaugural year, eight UAC members worked with NPS archaeologist, Courtney Bowles at the Maggie Walker National Historic Site. Maggie Walker was a civil rights activist and the first female bank president in the country. Using historical documents and pictures, the high-schoolers constructed Maggie's vision of the city of Richmond, including the parts of the city that were important to her. As their capstone project, they created a "zine" with information on the impact Maggie had on the city, a map connecting Maggie's Richmond to the 2015 version. They also transformed a newspaper box to replicate 20<sup>th</sup> century versions with a depiction of Walker and a quote that reads: "Not failure, but low aim, is a crime."



The summer program focused on a community called Gravel Hill, where the high school UAC team excavated an archaeological dig and conducted oral histories of the resident in the neighborhood. Gravel Hill was previously a community of freed slaves and continues to be a residential neighborhood. Through their excavations and work in the community, the youth used real tools that archaeologists and historians use to find out about their urban histories.

## **GROUNDWORK MILWAUKEE**

### ***JUNIOR YOUNG FARMERS***

In Wisconsin, Groundwork Milwaukee (GW-MKE) has established the Junior Young Farmers program within Milwaukee Urban Gardens. The Junior Young Farmers are a supplemental program to the Green Team, and works with high-school aged youth also. Here, interested Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) member farmers in the community mentor teenagers. This educational program is geared toward investing into the next generation of farmers by preparing high school students over the course of four years for the agricultural, community and fiscal responsibilities farmers have to take care of daily. Students learn how to grow and maintain a garden, gain entrepreneurial skills, build confidence and learn how to communicate with customers. They also learn how to invest in their own health and are given weekly CSA share of their own produce.

Students meet two times a week at a local farm that is leased by Milwaukee Urban Gardens, a land trust associated with GW-MKE. The farm hosts over 120 raised beds for local gardeners, ten of which are entrusted to ten Young Farmers.



## Jeremiah Roy, Groundwork New Orleans

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. With the Groundwork team, Jeremiah worked on making a road more accessible for seniors and handicapped people, building a trail and other projects at Grand Teton National Park.

Jeremiah's proudest moment in the past five years with GW NOLA came when he helped complete the restoration of the swamp along Bayou Avenue, and presented the results of the Green Team's restoration project to the Sewage and Water Board in New Orleans.



In 2014, the Young Farmers focused on producing urban agriculture while reducing the use of fossil fuels in bringing produce from farm to table. Therefore, students transport their produce shares to their customers by biking or canoeing on the Milwaukee River. A new partnership between Groundwork Milwaukee and Milwaukee Public Market has made it possible for Young Farmers to transport their product from the gardens downriver to the marketplace safely and easily.

### Groundwork USA's National Youth Initiatives

Groundwork USA vastly expanded its national youth programming for Groundwork youth across the network over the past two years. In August 2014, 56 Groundwork Green Team youth and youth leaders from around the country met in Montana for two one-week sessions in August to work on a variety of backcountry trail maintenance at Yellowstone National Park.

In 2015, through expanded partnerships with Yellowstone National Park, Grand Tetons National Park and Shenandoah National Park, Groundwork USA brought together many more youth leaders and Green Team youth from across the country to work, learn and explore. In order to gear up for the summer's work, on March 18, 2015, Groundwork Youth Leaders from across the United States flew to Texas for a Groundwork USA-led week-long training in trail building, construction, and agriculture.

Nine youth from Groundwork Dallas, New Orleans and Denver spent a week at Grand Teton National Park learning new skills that they took to their Groundwork projects back home, gaining more self-knowledge, as well as a greater appreciation for nature.

See Jeremiah Roy in New Orleans, at left, who was at Grand Teton National Park, and Medina Gedi of Groundwork Portland, who was at Yellowstone National Park, at right. 2015 was Medina's second year at Yellowstone, an experience she cherishes and learned a lot from. "This work at Yellowstone helps you...as much as it helps the park," she says. "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 that Groundwork Portland had a lot of community gardening projects and I interviewed with them and got the job."



Another national partnership that grew in 2015 was with Shenandoah National Park. Seventy (70) Green Team youth (some of whom are pictured at right) from Groundwork Trusts in Yonkers, NY; Washington DC; Somerville and Lawrence, MA; Richmond, VA; and Elizabeth, NJ, traveled to Shenandoah National Park for four one-week service-learning sessions.



### Green Jobs Training (Ages 18 – 25)

Groundwork Trusts operate a few different model youth, job training programs across the country, and all are designed to cater to young people in Groundwork communities where employment readiness opportunities are limited and a college education is not a given. While these are job-training programs first and foremost, they are also life coaching opportunities that meet trainees where they are in life with “wrap around” support that help trainees: build their transferable employment skills; navigate the job search process; and secure meaningful and relevant jobs, living wages, and opportunities for career growth and learning over time.

#### **GROUNDWORK DENVER GREEN CORPS**

One of Groundwork Denver's proudest projects is the Green Corps Crew work with Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, located about ten miles from the City of Denver. 2014 marked the Corps' 5<sup>th</sup> year working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the one of the country's biggest wildlife refuges. Over the years, the Groundwork Denver Green Corps crew has been a vital task force for the Wildlife Service essential to maintaining the refuge for the critters that live within its boundaries and its human visitors. Throughout summer, the crew learned how to identify and remove invasive species, as well as, learned how to plant native species. Learning skills through the Green Corps job readiness process instills a sense of ownership in each crew member's work: “This work matters to me because I know why I'm doing it. For example, invasive species removal: taking these invasive species down helps protect the native habitat. Hounds Tongue, an invasive weed, is poisonous to the Bison, so it's extremely important to remove them,” says Oscar Macais.

One of the Green Corps fondest memories of working in the Arsenal is from last spring (May 2014) when Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Sally Jewell (pictured at right), visited the wildlife refuge to announce the funding in support of the Green Corps program and many other programs like



this providing youth the opportunity to work in wildlife refuges across the country. Green Corps members got the chance to socialize with Secretary Jewell and also plant hundreds of Cottonwood trees in the Arsenal.

## **GROUNDWORK PROVIDENCE**

### ***GROUND CORP LANDSCAPE***

GroundCorp, a social venture of Groundwork Providence, is a landscape design-build and maintenance service. It provides valuable, paid, hands-on experience to graduates of our job training program as they search for permanent environmental work. Under the management of the Director of Field Operations, GroundCorp engages in both small-scale residential and larger-scale community landscape design and installation projects. Projects demonstrate urban landscape restoration and stormwater management best practices, contributing to the health and vitality of Providence's people and places.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

There is much success to be celebrated in the growth and development of Groundwork's youth programs over 2014 and 2015, as young leaders emerge across our national network, seen in the profiles here (<http://groundworkusa.org/category/resources/articles/>) and in their important work and growth, day-to-day, in communities across the country. Groundwork USA is looking forward to an active and exciting 2016, kicking off the year (with NPS) at Grand Teton National Park through the *Mountains to Main Street Urban Outreach Program*. Groundwork Youth leaders from Trusts across the country are coming together at Grand Teton from January 10-16, 2016, to learn about the Park and NPS, develop skills for outreach and interpretation, and develop action plans for their personal outreach projects, to be conducted back in their home cities. Our youth are looking forward to this learning adventure!

## Appendix 1

### **Groundwork New Orleans, LA ([groundworknola.org](http://groundworknola.org))**

GWNO worked at the following sites: Barataria Preserve, the French Quarter Visitor Center, and at Grand Tetons National Park. At these sites GWNO participated in species identification, invasive species removal, trail building, habitat restoration, historic preservation of buildings in Grand Tetons, and cleared two miles of trail at Yellowstone. There were 10 youth involved and 4 staff members.

### **Groundwork Richmond, CA ([groundworkrichmond.org](http://groundworkrichmond.org))**

GWRCA worked at the following sites: Pt. Reyes National Seashore and Yellowstone National Park. At Pt. Reyes they assisted NPS with a large festival (Sand and Sculpture Festival) and worked on stone walls and bear-proof boxes at Yellowstone National Park. They engaged 11 youth and 2 youth leaders in these activities.

### **Groundwork Portland, OR ([groundworkportland.org](http://groundworkportland.org))**

GWP worked in Yellowstone National Park on trail restoration and campground improvement. They took three youth and one youth leader.

### **Groundwork Elizabeth, NJ ([groundworkelizabeth.com](http://groundworkelizabeth.com))**

GWE worked at Morristown National Historic Site, at Shenandoah National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. At the Wick Farm site (within Morristown NHS) they performed trail building and maintenance. In Yellowstone, they brushed trails and removed invasives. They engaged 18 youth and four youth leaders.

### **Groundwork Denver, CO ([groundworkcolorado.org](http://groundworkcolorado.org))**

GWD worked in the following parks: Rocky Mountain National Park, Grand Tetons National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. They were involved in extensive amounts of invasive species removal and transplanting native vegetation. They also installed tent pads, decommissioned social trails, worked on historic building preservation, and footbridge construction. In all, they engaged 15 youth and 3 youth leaders.

### **Groundwork Somerville, MA ([groundworksomerville.org](http://groundworksomerville.org))**

GWS worked at the following national parks: Shenandoah National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, Minuteman National Historic Site, Longfellow House, Olmstead House, Kennedy Birthplace, Adams National Park, and Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site. At these locations the team worked on historic horticulture projects, erosion control, invasive species removal, building bear-proof boxes, tree pruning, plantings, trail building and bumper log installation. The team engaged 41 youth and 12 youth leaders.

### **Groundwork Richmond, VA ([groundworkrva.org](http://groundworkrva.org))**

GWRVA worked at four national parks: Richmond National Battlefield Park, Maggie L. Walker National Historical Site, Shenandoah National Park, and Yellowstone National Park. At these sites GWRVA engaged its Urban Archeology Corps, did trail grading along the Appalachian NST, installed bumper logs and check steps, removed invasives, and installed bear-proof boxes. They engaged 18 youth and three youth leaders.

### **Groundwork Anacostia River, D.C. ([groundworkdc.org](http://groundworkdc.org))**

GWAR worked at the following parks: Yellowstone National Park, Shenandoah National Park, and Ft. Dupont National Historic Site and Kenilworth Park. Their team performed archeological digs and land surveys, removed five tons of trash, installed bear boxes, rehabilitated camp sites, and resurfaced trails. They engaged 16 youth and four youth leaders.

**Groundwork Jacksonville, FL ([groundworkjacksonville.org](http://groundworkjacksonville.org))**

GWJ worked at the following parks: Fort Caroline National Memorial and Yellowstone National Park. At these sites GWJ cleared a view shed of the St. John's River, removed invasives, worked on stone walls, and rehabilitated social trails. They engaged 10 youth and 2 youth leaders.

**Groundwork Lawrence, MA ([groundworklawrence.org](http://groundworklawrence.org))**

GWL worked at the following parks: Yellowstone National Park and Shenandoah National Park. There the youth worked on general maintenance including invasive species removal, trail work, decommissioning social trails, installing new bear-proof boxes, and rehabbing tent pads. In all the team engaged 9 youth and 3 youth leaders.

**Groundwork Hudson Valley, NY ([groundworkhv.org](http://groundworkhv.org))**

GWHV worked at the following parks: Jacob Riis National Park, Sandy Hook National Recreation Area, Gateway National Recreation Area (Jamaica Bay), Shenandoah National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Fire Island National Seashore, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The corps rebuilt a historic building for Gateway, painted historic structures, did stonework and trail redevelopment, refurbished an amphitheater, and built osprey poles. GWHV engaged 64 youth and 4 youth leaders.

**Groundwork Dallas ([groundworkdallas.org](http://groundworkdallas.org))**

GWD worked at the following park: Grand Teton National Park. There they worked restoring historic structures, removed invasives and built foot bridges. They engaged 3 youth and 1 youth leader.

**Groundwork Dona Ana ([groundworkda.org](http://groundworkda.org))**

GWDA worked at the following park: Yellowstone National Park. There the youth worked on restoring historic stone walls and trail cribbing. They brought 1 youth leader and 1 youth.

**Groundwork Bridgeport ([groundworkbridgeport.org](http://groundworkbridgeport.org))**

GWB worked at Weir Farm National Historic Site on a summer restoration project with its Green Team crew, and at Yellowstone National Park.

**See other Trusts' sites for more on their current youth programs:**

Groundwork Cincinnati ([groundworkcincinnati.org](http://groundworkcincinnati.org))

Groundwork Indy ([groundworkindy.org](http://groundworkindy.org))

Groundwork Milwaukee ([groundworkmilwaukee.org](http://groundworkmilwaukee.org))

Groundwork Providence ([groundworkprovidence.org](http://groundworkprovidence.org))

Groundwork San Diego ([groundworksandiego.org](http://groundworksandiego.org))