

Mountains to Main Street:



Urban Ambassador Program 2017

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Ambassador Ni Hamilton's group of young women explore the Women's Rights National Historic Park.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to all those who made Mountains to Main Street possible:

Grand Teton Association

Grand Teton National Park Foundation

GroundworkUSA

Teton Science Schools

Student Conservation Association

various NPS Academy members

National Park Service Urban Fellows and Urban Agenda implementation team

Accomplishments



Ambassador Roger Osorio's youth from Community School 13 visit the Statue of Liberty for the first time.

Outcomes

1,110 under-represented youth and families in 13 major cities reached
834 people in inner city areas learned about national parks during an informal contact with
an ambassador
276 under-served youth attended park-themed events or park field trips
16 urban national parks

Ambassador Skills Gained

Use a program planning model
Effectively set goals
Turn challenges to opportunities
Move an idea into action
Critical thinking and creative problem solving
Working with partners
Leadership

Program Overview

Mountains to Main Street: Urban Ambassador Program (M2M) continues expanding the professional conservation experience of promising young adults *and* connects the next generation of stewards, advocates and visitors to parks, starting in the cities where they live. It starts with a one week workshop in Grand Teton to train young professionals (ambassadors) in community engagement planning. The ambassadors then return to their city homes to conduct national park outreach projects with underrepresented audiences. The ambassadors' projects help bridge the gap in awareness of and access to national park opportunities in urban areas. Mountains to Main Street meets the American population where 81 percent of them live - in cities - and serves strategic National Park Service goals.

During the week-long workshop in Grand Teton National Park, 15 ambassadors:

- Experience the grandeur of a western park
- Develop leadership, planning and community engagement skills
- Identify existing NPS resources for outreach - locations, lesson plans, distance learning broadcasts, etc.
- Create an action plan to implement a project in their home city
- Build a community of practice for support during their projects

The ambassadors tailor community engagement projects to align community's needs with park service goals of better serving all Americans, regardless of race or income. Each ambassador has autonomy to create an appropriate outing or series of events with the end goal of visiting a nearby national park site with under-served youth. Through this experience, ambassadors grow as community leaders learning transferrable skills from planning and goal-setting to collaboration and resilience.



Ambassadors talk with Superintendent Vela about the value of parks.



Ambassador leads his participants, creating a park inspired banner after their visit to Lowell NHP.

2017

Ambassadors

Ambassadors came from 13 major urban areas from across the country, ranging from New York City to Seattle, WA. More than 90 percent of the ambassadors were from traditionally under-represented races among national park staff and visitation: Latino, African American, Asian American or multi-racial.

- **Age:** 18 to 26 years old
- **Education:**
 - 67% College graduates
 - 27% Currently attending college
 - 6% College status unknown
- **Race & Ethnicity:** >90% or more of ambassadors are racially diverse: Latino, African American, Middle Eastern, Asian American or multi-racial.
- **Gender:** 40% male; 60% female
- **Represented Cities:** Durham, NC; New York, NY (Queens & The Bronx); Yonkers, NY; Richmond, VA; St. Paul, MN; Seattle, WA; Dallas, TX; Lowell, MA; Elizabeth, NJ; Alamo, CA; Buffalo, NY
- **Budget per Ambassador:**

Travel	\$1,000
Workshop: Room, Board & Instruction	\$773
Stipend	\$800
Supplies	\$200



Ambassadors explore how a youth career days could make parks more relevant in low income communities.

Workshop

The workshop is a crucial component of the program. It's the opportunity for outstanding young professionals to learn from each other, keeping a Jackson Hole tradition of bringing leaders together as a catalyst for conservation. The week includes: field trips that model different ways to meet audience needs; one-on-one planning and mentoring time; classroom sessions on using the SmartChart planning tool; and a culminating "Find Your Park Poster Session" where ambassadors pitch their project and receive feedback from peers and instructors. Field trips this year included: R-Park, Emily Stephens and National Museum of Wildlife Art in addition to a park career day, wildlife hike and example service day with the park's Western Center for Historic Preservation.

Community Engagement Projects

Project Guidelines:

1. Target audience for the project should be underrepresented in National Park visitation and people who have not previously visited national parks. In general, this means low income or racially diverse. Ambassadors were asked to focus on quality experiences as opposed to maximizing numbers of people contacted. The goal is to increase the participants' likelihood of returning to or learning more about national parks and nature.
2. Ambassadors host at least one event that takes the audience to a nearby national park.
3. The event should use the national park experience to meet a community need. (Example: High school students want to get jobs that pay and are interesting. An event would address their curiosity in job paths.)



Ambassador Lucy Crespo pitches her project during the workshop.



Ambassador Leslie Fuentes is a NPS Academy alumna, majored in Marine Biology, currently a research chemist at the Environmental Protection Agency in North Carolina. She's interned with the National Park Service in Santa Monica Recreational Area and Great Smoky Mountains as an interpreter and fish biologist and has noticed a lack of chemistry/toxicology programs for the public. Being a science major and a chemistry geek, she wants to be able to bring awareness and make the connection between chemistry and nature.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Job Opportunities

PROJECT

Took a group from the Hispanic Student Club at Durham Technical Community College to Bodie Island. Ambassador met with students at the school to talk about career options and ideas and share her experiences working with national parks, refuges and the Environmental Protection Agency as a chemist. She invited them for a beach outing to Cape Hatteras to chat about careers with a ranger, do a beach clean-up and enjoy the island. After the project, the ambassador continues to work with five of those attendees as a mentor and has shared her information with all participants for future help.

Cape Hatteras National Seashore

15 college students from Durham, NC

1 Career Day at the Beach



Ambassador Roger Osorio is originally from the Bronx but migrated over Yonkers and has lived there for most of his life. As a teen, Roger was a member of Groundwork Green Team. He was drawn to Mountains to Main Street to develop a capacity to take youth who've never been to a National Park - or even outside the city - and expose them to America's best idea. One of his greatest memories is having the opportunity to go to Milwaukee and just stand on the shore, looking out onto the Great Lakes. This was the moment he realized he wanted to explore the outdoors. The opportunity to offer this to other youth and students can spark a great change in their perspectives on the outdoors. Roger is a youth coordinator at Groundwork Yonkers.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Exploring Personal Identity

PROJECT:

"Roots in Your Backyard" was a project about migration and community. It started with 6th and 7th graders caring for a pollinator garden at their school. Students learned about the variety of pollinator plants that resided within the garden and how to weed, water, and prune. This was crucial in the sense that they will be the guardians of the garden following the end of the program, and the students connected the idea of migrating pollinators with their own families, many of whom are immigrants. We then spent time learning about the concept of public lands to connect the school's public garden space to National Parks. Ellis Island, a nearby national park site, combined these ideas of public spaces and immigration. Together with their families, the ambassador planned the transportation and budget to take the ferry to Ellis Island. Parents and children attended the national park outing to Ellis Island as a way to connect with the longstanding history of public lands and immigration in the U.S.

Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island

13 middle schoolers from Yonkers, NY

1 ferry ride, 1 Statue of Liberty climb, 1 day



Kendra Norrell is the Green Team Manager for Groundwork Richmond, VA, brought on to increase science education in the conservation projects in Richmond, VA. Her interests include working with community residents (especially youth), getting them interested in being outdoors, and investing in future conservation efforts. Her passion for the outdoors was discovered through her exposure to environmental science in college. Kendra would like to offer others the opportunity to find their gateway to the outdoors and thinks creating a city wide event to a National Park Service site is a great way to start!

Audience Need / Project Theme: Academic Performance

7th graders from the Binford Middle School Higher Achievement Program are deeply in need of positive stories about Black Americans. The group is enrolled in a program intended to improve academic performance so the goal of the trip was to expand their understanding of African American history as well as to encourage them to be open to new experiences in life. (National parks are not high on their "to do" list. The 7th graders attended a canal boat ride with Riverfront Historic Canal Cruises near the James River. Followed by a walk led by Ranger Pooler from NPS talking about the importance of the James River on historic and modern Richmond, VA. The canal walk ended at the Tredegar site where the youth were allowed to explore the museum a bit.

Tredegar Iron Works & Civil War Museum

23 7th graders from Richmond, VA

1 boat ride, 1 ranger program, 1 day of new experiences



Chase Kane , NPS Academy class of 2016, a sophomore finishing an Associate’s degree in International Studies at Northern Virginia Community College. In the past two years, he’s continued to develop his passion for outreach and the environment through work with the American Conservation Experience, U.S Fish & Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. He is currently the Facility Supervisor with Loudoun County Parks & Recreation. He firmly believes that the future success of the Department of the Interior relies on our ability to educate and incorporate diverse audiences, and it is a goal of his to bring this to fruition.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Job Opportunities & Access to Green Space

PROJECT

At-risk teens aged 13 - 18 from Teen Teamwork attended a paddle trip on the Mississippi River, exploring the idea of finding fulfilling work. During the canoe trip, the teens learned about outdoor guiding and commercial water industries. A lunch stop with retired Ranger David Wiggins at Boom Island exposed the teens to park service careers in law enforcement, and the St. Anthony Falls Lock & Dam Visitor Center tour exposed them to interpretation in parks. The ambassador, a former NPS Academy intern, shared his own inspirational story about working hard and obtaining internships in national parks and Fish and Wildlife Service. The ambassador didn’t get into the NPS Academy internship program the first time but refocused, got in the second time, and has done three public lands internships and now is a Mountains to Main Street ambassador.

**Mississippi National River & Recreation Area
Minneapolis, MN**

30 teens from Minneapolis, MN

4 career types, 1 canoe trip, 1 day

5.



Angelica Munoz , NPS Academy class of 2013, the nature lover from the urban jungle also known as New York City. One of her first jobs was interning with the National Park Service, though the internship was introduced to all of the recreational opportunities and historic aspects within the National Parks of the New York Harbor. She can’t wait to continue to share this with fellow New Yorkers!

Audience Need / Project Theme: Exploring Personal Identity & Making America Home

My audience was 9th grade newly immigrated students with less than four years in the United States. My audience was 75 of my own high school students. Since my students are all new to the country they are still learning about the culture and history of the United States. Going to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island was a great way for students to learn more about American history while making connections to their own immigration story. Students were not only able to learn more about American culture and history but they got the opportunity to go Island hopping from Manhattan to Liberty Island to Ellis Island. It was a day packed with adventure, wonder and excitement.

**Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island
Bronx, NY**

75 9th graders from the Bronx

1 day, 1 ferry ride, 1 climb in the Statue of Liberty



Cleone Abrams, Nevada Conservation Corps 2014 at Great Basin National Park, is a sophomore studying history at the University of Washington and minoring in environmental science and education. Her experiences as a participant and leader in outdoor education have profoundly shaped and changed her life and have motivated her to give back by combining the outdoors and history with her desire to encourage confidence and environmental awareness in others.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Exploring Personal Identity & Making America Home

I took my group of minority, pre-dominantly female who are rising high school freshmen to two museums in downtown Seattle. The theme of the day was about immigration and how to make a new place your home and how parks exploring parks can help you understand your new home. The highlight of the day-long tour was when the ranger had students write 10-word-stories at the Wing Luke Museum to express their identity and connections to Parks.

Wing Luke Museum, Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park

24 rising 9th grader girls from Seattle, WA

1 day, 2 museums, 24 stories



Melissa Guevara is originally from Yonkers, NY, and moved to Dallas, TX, in June 2016 to work as Groundwork Dallas' Youth Program Coordinator. Melissa previously interned with US Fish and Wildlife Service and was a member of Groundwork Green Team as a teen. She wants to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn and enjoy our Public Lands. The youth she serves rarely leave their neighborhoods and parents can be very nervous about letting them go do these things. The Mountains to Main Street program would help us expand our program to Waco Mammoth NM.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Job Opportunities and Access to Green Space

We taught teens from Dallas, TX, about new scientific careers and the joys of outdoor recreation. Many urban youth are not able to enjoy the wonders of nature or don't see the value in it. They don't know that the National Park Service exists or that there are possible employment opportunities. The majority of youth (11) participated in the outdoor recreation portion of the events. During these events the youth went on day trips to Chickasaw National Recreational Area. They visited four-different springs, hiked a trail, swam in a natural swimming hole, jumped from the top of a miniature waterfall, walked in spring fed creeks, unsuccessfully searched for American Bison, and drank mineral water. They found an armadillo, southeastern five-lined skink, damselflies, crayfish, frogs, and daddy-long legs. Four youth visited the paleontology career discovery day at Waco Mammoth NM and its Dallas counterpart at the Perot Museum. During the career discovery opportunity the youth were able to go to the Perot Museum at Fair Park and talk to paleontologist and curators for some it was their first time visiting a natural history museum.

Chickasaw NRA & Waco Mammoth NM

11 high school youth from Dallas, TX

2 trips, 1 hike, 1 swim, 1 waterfall and 1 career day



Amanda Baez is originally from The Bronx, NY, and graduated from UConn in 2012 with a degree in Natural Resources. Her first experience with a national park was while she lived and worked on Thompson Island, one of the many islands and peninsulas that make up the Boston Harbor National & State Park. She describes her experience as an absolute privilege to be able to live in such a beautiful space. In fall of 2016 she joined the Groundwork Rhode Island team as their new Program Coordinator. Part of her role will be to coordinate and run our 2017 summer Green Team! When presented with this opportunity to, not only visit another National Park, but also be able to learn, grow, and develop amazing youth programs she jumped on the opportunity.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Access to Green Space / Exposure to Areas beyond the Neighborhood

PROJECT

Inner city teens, ages 15-18, from Providence, RI. The youth that participated in this program were employees of Groundwork Rhode Island via our summer Green Team. The group has minimal access to local green spaces and the park outing was a chance to spend two days and one night on Peddocks. The youth learned about the natural landscape, island history and worked with a park ranger to create deer fencing around new trees to protect them. By bringing our Green Team to Boston we were able to introduce them to new spaces that they can easily access, even from Providence. By the end of the trip our youth were already planning their return (this time with their families) and asking questions on how to access more places like Peddocks.

Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area

8 high school teens from Providence, RI

2 days, 1 night, 1 service project, 1 play day



Eric Lundquist a native Texan who is currently residing in Lawrence, MA, where he received his BA in Anthropology. Eric is an Americorps VISTA going into his second year working for Groundwork Lawrence. His hobbies include science fiction, spending time in wild areas, and a good meal cooked with friends. On his free time he runs an amateur foragers' club in Lawrence and is really into guerrilla garden native wildflowers.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Empowering youth to Embrace their city and heritage

Lawrence, MA, has a high immigrant population and most of the youth served at Groundwork Lawrence identify as immigrants. The project goal was to take the Green Teams sense of pride and belonging in this community and the surrounding region, while empowering them to become ambassadors of their own city and heritage. Lowell NHP tells a powerful story of the largest labor dispute in U.S. history, and many involved were women and immigrants. The trip the Lowell NHP was a staggered 3-day event. The two days were a week a party at Lowell National Historic Park and included a walk, museum tour and boat ride. The walk and exhibit tour told the story of “the Mill girls” - single girls and immigrants who worked at the textile mill. The mill was the site of the Bread and Roses strike. The group discussed the issues and challenges that have changed - or still exist - today and how it relates to their neighborhoods and among their families. The third day, the group gathered in the North Common neighborhood to do an art mural with Lawrence Arts House and Las Piranas art collective. The youth led the discussion of what they wanted their mural, celebrating their local culture and resilience. Roses became a symbol of resilience in their discussion.

Lowell National Historical Park

7 youth, 3 days, 1 mural
Lawrence, MA



Ayelen Lucia (Lucy) Crespo is the Youth Leader for Groundwork Elizabeth, NJ. She attended Union County College for Biology and then transferring to Rutgers for Ecology, Evolution and Conservation. Her interests include learning how to create projects and programs to introduce her local community to nearby national parks and emphasize that there is still forest to be enjoyed in her local town of Elizabeth, NJ.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Women in Science & Technology Careers

PROJECT

Green Team members of diverse backgrounds, explored Edison's laboratory. Many of the Latinas, in particular, on the Green Team have had negative experiences that make them believe they couldn't pursue science and technology careers. Many of them immigrants, their parents have high goals for them and they want to please their families. The team lives in a nearby town and never knew the Edison laboratory was nearby and some don't even know much about Edison at all. The group toured the labs and watched presentations. Everyone picked an invention that inspired them and discussed what they learned. We talked about different STEM career paths and the lack of diversity in STEM fields. The experience opened their minds to what they could do!

Thomas Edison National Historic Park

7 high school teens, 1 laboratory tour, 1 discussion



Montell Hendricks from Indianapolis, IN, worked in nutrition and food education. This career move began while working in a rooftop greenhouse in the science department of the University of Southern Indiana studying Psychology. While studying at USI he was also able to help mentor local elementary students through the university's college mentorship program. This work led to a passion in nutrition and working towards improving food conditions and access throughout urban communities. He joined the Groundwork Indy team in the summer of 2016 as a Green Team Crew Leader responsible for leading youth and volunteers during projects. He's now a program coordinator with responsibilities including daily operations of both the Green Team and the GroundCorps programs as well as community outreach and engagement within Northwest Indianapolis and surrounding neighborhoods.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Empowerment

PROJECT

My audience was 22 was, mostly black males, ranging from ages 9-26. All were considering their workforce options and needed a chance to escape the stresses of the city. I also wanted to give them more examples of positive aspects of black history that are not commonly known. The participants escaped the worries of home in Indianapolis to visit Mammoth Cave National Park. Participants were even able to go underground into the caves and a ranger, also black, who was a descendent of the original Mammoth Cave explorer Stephen Bishop explore like our ancestors did many years before. He shared stories of the slaves who constructed the cave trails. Participants loved walking the paths their ancestors built.

Mammoth Cave National Park

22 young men and boys from Indianapolis, IN

1 day, 1 tour, 1 incredible role model



Estelle Maisonett, an artist from the Bronx with a BFA from SUNY Purchase College. Using recycled and natural materials from the environment, she re-creates mixed media landscapes. As a public artist and muralist she enjoys creating paintings of the natural landscape and community. Currently, she is the Program Coordinator and Teaching Artist at the Bronx Children’s Museum. Using STEAM-based programming, rooted in art and science, she teaches grades Pre-K-3rd to become natural stewards of their environment and foster a connection to nature through art. She believes participating in the Mountains to Main Street program will allow her to use art as a tool to expose students to the rich natural and historic resources that exist within the National Parks in NYC.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Access to Nature

PROJECT

A class of 1st grade students - mostly low-income English Language Learners of Latino or Middle Eastern descent - participated in this series. The group completed the Bronx Children’s Museum “Rivers on the Go” program, themed around nature as a connector to all cultures, and then took a trip to Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The trip to the refuge was a chance to experience an “un-manicured” park, compared with the city parks in their area. The children explored the nature trails along the coast and wetlands areas, watching horseshoe crabs and caterpillars, and took the Junior Ranger pledge to be stewards of nature.

Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge

30 1st graders from Queens, NY
1 day, 1 bus ride, 1 hike, 30 new Junior Rangers



Haosen (Jose) Xu has been a member of the Green Team for 2 years and attended Yellowstone YCC for GW Richmond and is now an emerging Green Team Leader. He spends his Saturday mornings working with Groundwork Richmond. He is also a prominent member of a Chinese newcomer community. His friends know him as Jose. Besides Groundwork, Jose, is very involved with his college community as the president of both the Alpha Gamma Sigma honor society and International Student Club. What time he has in between, he tutors and works as a laboratory aid for the school.

Audience Need / Project Theme: Understanding American Culture / Finding a Sense of Belonging

PROJECT

Ambassador worked with Asian - mostly Chinese - college students who didn’t know about national parks or do outdoor recreation. Many were shy and sensitive, so the ambassador recruited them through one-on-one interactions to visit have bart to the NHS together, having lunch together, talk to the rangers, and explore this National historical site together. The national park trip aimed to help students explore beyond the college campus and learn more about their new country. The trip helped the group learn new sections of the BART public transportation and visit an American national park. Though the “sell” was difficult for the ambassador, the trip sparked “aha’s” among participants when they saw that the Nobel prize winner Eugene O’Neil had a passion for Asian art and philosophy. The trip helped them draw connections between their old country and new country.

Eugene O’Neil National Historic Site

10 community college students from Richmond, CA
1 day, 1 subway trip, 1 tour



Niasha Hamilton, or as her friends know her, Ni, is originally from Niagara Falls, NY, but moved to Buffalo, NY during 11th grade. She is ambitious sophomore in Buffalo State College, majoring in Political Science with two minors in Psychology and Writing. Considering herself as the girly girl cheerleader type she unexpectedly fell in love with the outdoors last summer while doing an internship with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. She loved it so much, that it has now become an essential part of her life and has motivated her to become a youth leader at Groundwork Buffalo.

PROJECT

The young women on the Green Team who attended ranged from 14-16 years old. They all grew up around hardships and daily community violence. Despite that, they want to branch outside of their communities and experience things that normally wouldn't. They hiked to the site via the commemorative sculpture trail. The young women really benefited from learning about a time in history they knew very little about. Although it was a fairly easy hike, the majority of them never went on a hike before and enjoyed it.

Women's Rights National Historic Park

8 high school women from Buffalo, NY

1 tour, 1 hike



Youth from Bronx Community School 13 on her Ellis Island outing.

Core Impacts

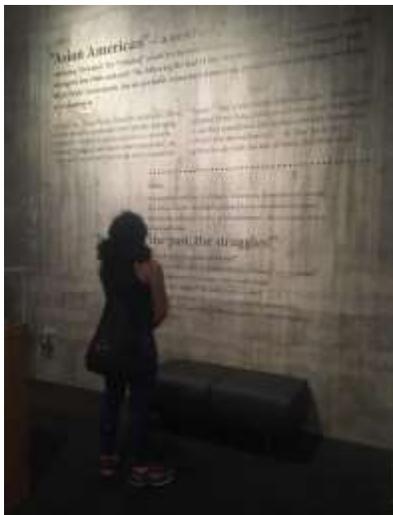
National Park Trip Participants

The 15 Mountains to Main Street ambassadors, trained at Grand Teton National Park reached under-served audiences across the country. The most common community/participant needs addressed through the programs were: career and job skills; exploring personal identity; learning about new places outside of their comfort zone, and academic performance. Most ambassadors served middle or high school aged youth. The youth were typically already participating in an existing non-profit or school program, and the ambassadors' national park project augmented that work.



"The most meaningful part is the fact that they now know what the National Parks are and have a genuine desire to return with their families."

Ambassadors' final reports revealed some common themes among their participants' reaction to their park experiences. Many of the ambassadors worked with immigrant populations – from China, Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries, the Middle East – and it was a common reaction for them to be surprised to find their own, multi-cultural identity in many of the national parks. One park ranger said it well that parks tell small, hidden stories that aren't in history books. Ambassadors reported:



Youth from explores the idea of making a new city a home.

They [were surprised] to feel connection in this foreign country [and that] Chinese culture was so popular when the ranger explained the Feng Shui layout of a Nobel prizewinners' home.

The ah-ha moment of our trip was learning about the slaves who actually constructed and explored Mammoth Cave. The highlight of the trip was getting to meet an African American park ranger who is a living descendant of the original Mammoth Cave explorer Stephen Bishop.

Students were so impressed by the large volume of people visiting the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and thought it was interesting that visitors want to know more about the immigrant experience. Some students were wondering in 100 years if there was going to be a National Park that explains their story as Latino American immigrants in the 21st century.

The students wrote 10-word-stories at the Wing Luke Museum to express their connection to Parks. Stories included, "I am multi-cultural, I am future history," and, "I may be young, but I've been through things too."

Other common themes reported connected to new perspectives – and comfort! – in nature. Many of the ambassadors had to convince youth to participate because the kids “didn’t like the outdoors.” Exploring with ambassadors changed their minds.



Ambassador Chase Kane (NPS Academy 2016) takes teens on a canoe trip to explore outdoor career possibilities.

The first day working with the students they were all scared of bugs and were glued to their devices. By the third day all they wanted to do was be outside.

The first group moment was having to walk under a 'secret' underground tunnel to the mineral waters and drink them. [Inner city neighborhoods often have serious river pollution, so moments like this leave a bit impression.]

One of the participants who was the most vocally against being and working outdoors stated that they enjoyed being on the canoe trip...In short, the nature did the work!

My 6 year old students stumbled across a caterpillar. They weren't concerned with getting dirty [or] grossed out by a bug...Everyone kneeled down, got really quiet, and observed the caterpillar move. When the ranger pulled out a horse shoe crab, my students watched it in awe. They shouted "He looks prehistoric! Can we give him a name, ranger John"? They named the horse shoe crab Horus and shouted "go, Horus, go" as they watched the crab head back into the water.



Finally, many ambassadors reported that the experienced opened youths' eyes to the national park ideal.

The simple fact that at the start of the program the students never heard of National Parks and now they have been to three of them and know how to get there! For them it was the reality that they have ownership of said lands.

The best part of the trip for most of them was being able to freely explore a new place without any restrictions. Second favorite moment was roasting marshmallows over a fire on the beach while watching the sunset.

They were honored to have the responsibility of protecting green space and educating other children about the importance of nature. They were so thrilled [to be sworn in as Junior Rangers] that some of them kissed their badges before placing them on their backpacks.



Amanda Baez hikes her kids to their site.

Ambassador Leadership Development

Mountains to Main Street provides career development for promising young professionals. The week-long workshop in Grand Teton emphasizes national park awareness, leadership, strategic planning, community engagement as well as the NPS Universal Competencies Problem Solving, Individual Development and Communication. The broad goal was for the ambassadors to become mobilizers in their community who provide national park programming in a way that was deeply meaningful for non-traditional park audiences.

The workshop week started with leadership and systems thinking applied to challenging disconnect between young and diverse people and parks. The curriculum used a version Spitfire Smartchart © planning to turn ideas into action. The culmination of the week was a Find Your Park Fair where ambassadors pitch their project plan to each other, community partners and park staff. When ambassadors return home, park and GroundworkUSA staff maintain



Skills ambassadors felt improved the most due to the workshop.

contact through email, social media and phone to mentor them. Mentorship helps the ambassadors troubleshoot common challenges of community engagement.

Creating a project pushes ambassadors to gain entrepreneurial skills. While many are used to leading kids or peers, the projects challenge them to become leaders and coordinators of multiple partners or adult community members. The added complexity leads to new skills in collaboration, communication and networking:

I need to build better relationships with the parents and build trust through parent-teacher conferences, [providing] more outreach to churches and during teacher-parent conferences.

This experience helped me realize that there is more to simply devising a fun program. It was great to plan with multiple partners ... It allowed me to balance what Groundwork RVA, Higher Achievement, and the National Parks wanted ...and to create something that benefited everyone at the end of the day.

Once I reached out I realized people were happy to help me organize the trip and provided helpful suggestions.

This experience has taught me to always utilize your network to the best of your ability, communicate effectively, and rely heavily on planning.



Ambassadors visit a restored gravel pit in Jackson, WY, to discuss how to connect urban parks to national parks.

Ambassadors had to show adaptability and persistence to complete projects. While they do the initial plan and project proposal during the workshop week, they need to adapt plans as they learn more about partners' and participants' needs, desires and schedules.

I learned to step back, to accept when things went off the rails.

I attempted three times to organize my project...but plans fell through. However, thanks to utilizing my network...I was able to circumnavigate the first two failed attempts.

I was feeling pain about having to [coordinate] 3 groups of people. I have to find the time that works for both National park rangers and my audiences. I have to adjust the entire plan every time of any people makes any changes. I really learned be patience and to be ready to [face] changes or challenges.

It showed me the type of youth I can encounter and how to have a back up plan if my original plan ends up going off track for whatever reason.

Lastly, implementing the plan inspires ambassadors on their next steps in life.



Ambassadors visit the wildlife biologist during the

I sincerely hope I can gain more experience doing this kind of work. It was honestly very satisfying.

I have forgotten how great I feel when I give back to my community. This experience has shined a light for me to pursue a field related to environmental education/community outreach.

As I get older my goal is to introduce the National Park Service to others, just as others did for me when I was in my students' position.

Leveraging Resources

Ambassadors worked with local partners upon returning home to amplify efforts. Partners contributed by donating funds; providing transportation, equipment, food or discounts; and contributing staff time to help recruit or present programming.

Partners
Teen Teamwork
Wilderness Inquiry
Bronx Children's Museum
Women's Center
Lawrence Arts House
Las Piranas Art

Particularly in urban areas, the cost and complexity of transportation was a key challenge. Much of the funding goes towards subway, bus passes, or gas costs. One ambassador was able to get guided canoe trips donated for his youth.

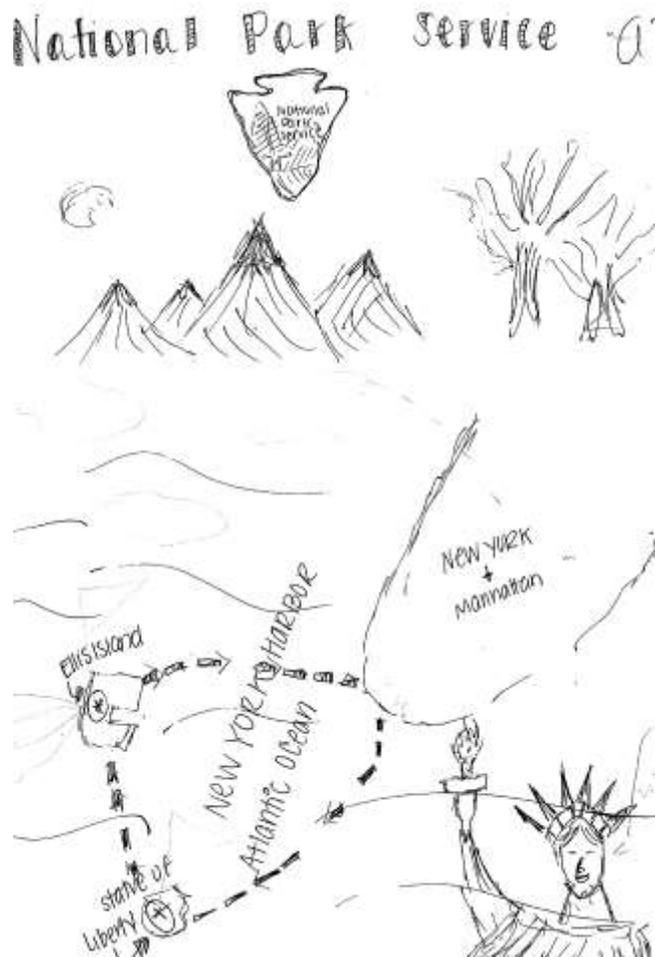
While each ambassador had a small supply budget (~\$200), most found they needed to supplement it through work with local partners. Entrance fees and transportation costs were the number one financial challenge ambassadors encountered. The majority superintendents at the urban national parks visited chose to waive entrance fees for Mountains to Main Street trips. The most common use of funds in addition to transportation was purchasing food. Many ambassadors wanted to provide food because most trips served low income participants and because food is such a crucial social component of these experiences. Partners were also central component for reaching the target demographic and creating culturally relevant programs and events.



Looking Ahead

An additional impact of 2016 Mountains to Main Street was internal learning among national parks. Grand Teton staff led webinars for other educators, focused on improving work done with underserved youth, and the program was featured in several internal newsletters as a model for urban engagement. GroundworkUSA is also building stronger internal connections to national parks across the country. Ambassador Tanner Yess (2016) returned in 2017 to teach and mentor other Groundwork ambassadors during the workshop week and share the wisdom he'd gained during his project.

This program continues to show significant results both in the personal growth of ambassadors as conservation leaders and in the impact in the ambassadors' home cities. The outreach projects reached new audiences who wouldn't normally have access – or awareness – of their national parks and connected those audiences to stories relevant to their own lives. An important factor in urban outreach confirmed the value of the Mountains to Main Street model: inner city populations are vulnerable to the “one-and-done” work. National Park Service staff could not have achieved the same results the ambassadors achieved. Ambassadors worked with their existing networks, lead youth as a peer from their neighborhood, and designed experiences that fit within longer term partner programming. The result for participating inner city youth was a meaningful experience with a national park *in the context of* larger personal growth and education programs. This affirmed how crucial the selection and work of ambassadors is for the successful urban programming and sparked ideas about the potential to incorporate young tribal members as future ambassadors among the tribal nations affiliated with Grand Teton. This will continue to be a priority as the program is fine-tuned in coming years.



Ambassador Angie Munoz sketched out a map to help her immigrant students make sense of their field trip. Mapping out the schedule helped reduce anxiety about traveling to a new neighborhood.

Appendix

Media Links

- Mountains to Main Street video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E59BsUvuJ5c&feature=youtu.be>
- Breona Green shares her experience: <http://www.gtnpf.org/3776-2/>
- Ashley Perez's blog, "People, Parks & Places" <https://mountainstomainstreet-aip.exposure.co/mountains-to-main-street>
- Teton Science School blog: www.tetonscience.org/index.cfm?id=journal&articleID=mountains-to-main-street
- "'Mountains to Main Street' ambassadors to bring National Park love to the inner cities"
- <http://buckrail.com/137697712257630208>

GroundworkUSA blogs:

- Mountains to Main Street launch <http://groundworkusa.org/spotlight/mountains-main-street/>
- "Closing the Diversity Gap" <http://groundworkusa.org/from-mountains-to-main-streets-groundwork-ambassadors-helps-national-parks-reach-out-to-new-audiences/>
- Featuring Dele <http://groundworkcolorado.org/2016/02/from-the-rocky-mountains-to-welton-street-mountains-to-main-street-recap/>

Why create Mountains to Main Street?

- To continue growing conservation career skills among diverse, up-coming professionals that can prepare them for permanent employment with parks and park partners.
- To enhance NPS services for under-served, urban populations while building park support among the next generation of visitors.

What is Mountains to Main Street?

Workshop - One week in the Tetons where urban ambassadors participate in:

- Orientation to national park system and the variety of sites managed
- Training in strategic planning, community outreach and partnerships
- Collaborative development of personal action plans to implement outreach projects

Urban Ambassadorship – (Part time) Over the following 3 months, ambassadors:

- Implement outreach projects in urban areas with groups under-represented groups, e.g. Boys & Girls Clubs.
- Organize an outing to a nearby national park site with participants who are new to the national park system.

Community of Practice:

- Ambassadors connect via webinar, social media and conference calls to share successes and challenges and learn from one another.

Who are the ambassadors?

- Young adults, ages 18 to 25, who have previous exposure to national parks and public lands that created a strong desire to share these experiences with others. This program is designed to give these ambassadors the skills to turn that passion into action. Partners looked for ambassadors who were already well-connected within their community or functioning as “influencers.”
- Many are from low income neighborhoods. See “2017 Ambassadors” section for details on represented cities and demographics.
- **Recruitment:** All participants were either members of GroundworkUSA and recruited from among NPS Academy alumni.

How did it get from idea to implementation?

- **Instruction & design:** GTNP staff, Teton Science School, GroundworkUSA, and NPS Academy alumni designed the program and provided workshop instruction and facilitation.
- **Oversight:** GroundworkUSA and GTNP staff provided intern oversight and coaching during the ambassadorship. GroundworkUSA also provided resources such as office space and transportation.
- **Funding:** Generous support from Grand Teton National Park Foundation, Grand Teton Association, and additional grants paid for ambassador travel, instruction and stipends. Many ambassadors identified additional support upon return to their homes, e.g. in kind donations from outfitters, transportation agencies or restaurants.

What are the measures of success?

- Urban Ambassadors:
 - Gain skills in NPS Workforce Competencies, Systems Thinking and community engagement
 - Design and implement outreach action plan and projects
 - Share lessons learned to be compiled for best practices for urban outreach
- Outreach Projects:
 - Connect a minimum of 15 members of an under-served, urban audience to a national park near their home
 - Increase awareness of NPS resources and opportunities among urban youth participants
- National Park Service:
 - Increase youth employee and/or volunteer hours
 - Reach at least 225 new, urban participants who are new to national parks
 - Compile ambassador input and create a list best practices relevant for urban engagement
 - Grow the pool of highly qualified, diverse candidates by training 15 young professionals in strategic planning, Systems Thinking and outreach