



# GreenBeat

The National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Program and Groundwork USA have teamed up to engage youth from diverse backgrounds with their local National Parks as part of the Groundwork Green Team Program.

**Here's what's happening**



## Camping's OK in Oklahoma For Dallas Green Team

**The GW Dallas Green Team hit the trail** in July for a week long camping and service trip to Chickasaw National Recreation Area in Oklahoma. The eight-member team and their Team leader, Darren Eason, were joined in the trip by the GW Dallas Board Treasurer and its Executive Director. Her nephew, who was working on his Eagle Scout badge, shared his camping skills with the Green Team, helped with meals and showed the Green Team students how to cook with Dutch ovens.

The 9,800+ acre park welcomed the Green Team with partially forested hills, crystal springs, streams and lakes. In return, the Green Team worked on trail maintenance on two trails that had been damaged by years of water and erosion. They were joined by a local NPS Youth Conservation Corps team. Green Team members had an opportunity to show off some of the skills they learned earlier as part of their Green Team training and participation in building trails in Dallas's Great Trinity



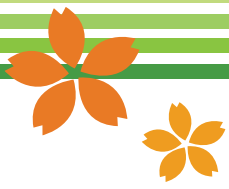
Forest. This was the first time the Dallas youth had gone camping. High school Junior Shelton Sheperd said that he felt like “The trip has helped me to open my eyes about the world and to help me become a real man. We had to cook our food outside and sleep in a tent, and it was so dark at night. We learned how to use the moonlight and let our eyes adjust to the darkness so we didn’t have to use a flashlight. That was cool.”

High school sophomore Dyrenecia Robertson said that she learned a lot. “I didn’t know that water could be so clear and blue. I hope we get to help make the Trinity River look like the river we swam at in Oklahoma.”

High school sophomore Adarius Fulce said that he “would like to learn more about biology and I want to have more camp-outs for the younger

kids. I hope I can come back again next year.” Students also participated in a night hike with two park rangers and learned about the various types of nocturnal creatures and drank pure mineral water from a freshwater spring. “That water was so cool. I couldn’t believe I was drinking water right out of the ground”, said high school junior Saquan Fulce.

At night, the students played games and shared stories around the campfire. They all learned the campground rules about being respectful of other campers and experienced in action, when some neighbors came in and started to get loud and rowdy. The students also met some new friends, other youth who were at the campground with their parents and went fishing with their new friends in the afternoons.



## Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

*Green Team builds partnerships with national parks in Indiana and Michigan*

**This summer, the 17 members of the** GW Gary's Green Team became resource management 'experts' through a five-week intensive experience with Indian Dunes National Lakeshore. Every day, the team explored, conserved and protected different areas of this 15,000-acre site filled with marshes, prairies, rivers, bogs, swamps, oak savannas and dunes. Their work helped preserve the park and helped rangers create lesson plans to teach other students the importance of stewardship and environmental education. Youth removed invasive species in some areas

and planted native species in other areas. Two times a week, the Green Team worked at Cowles Bog to remove non-native plants, also visiting Inland Marsh to remove honeysuckle, Tremont to remove Euonymous and West Beach to remove white sweet clover. At first, team members did not know which plants to lop, but quickly learned to identify the unwanted species.

The team also collected two types of sage at Mnoke Prairie and planted them in the park greenhouse as part of an effort to replenish the native plant population.

The program integrated presentations, community outreach and first-hand environmental interactions with the work component. *"It gave inner-city kids the chance to experience nature and broaden their horizons,"* said Marsha



Daniel, Teacher-Ranger-Teacher at the park. Team members visited the Douglas Center to observe animals and study their habitat. They later went on a cruise in Michigan City to conduct experiments and collect water samples. Students also spent time in staff meetings, at the park visitor center and at the Bailly Homestead, one of several historic sites within the park. Green Team members had the chance to talk with an archaeologist and examine artifacts.

The Green Team's work at Indiana Dunes and the education experiences engaged the team members with their local national park and introduced them to careers they had not thought of. They also learned financial literacy and money management as part of earning a paycheck this summer. And with the involvement of the NPS Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program at the park, the program they helped develop this summer will be integrated into school curriculum for Gary students over the coming year. Not bad for a summer job!



## Green Team Reflection

I really had to work on staying motivated until the job was finished. The work was hard, but I learned new things, for instance; identifying honeysuckle. I also learned the good plants from the bad ones.

**Donte' Christopher**

*GW Gary Green Team Member*

