



GROUNDWORK LAWRENCE GREEN TEAM

Groundwork Lawrence is a non-profit organization working to create sustainable environmental change through community-based partnerships. Groundwork Lawrence is an affiliate of Groundwork USA. The **Green Team** program offers part-time, paid positions for high school students from Lawrence to help lead local environmental initiatives, conduct environmental research, and participate in hands-on improvement projects throughout the City of Lawrence. The program is intended to promote the protection and restoration of critical ecological systems and natural resources in Lawrence by engaging teens in advocacy and service-learning efforts focused on the community's waterways, parks and open spaces. In addition, financial literacy and career development skills are integrated into educational workshops. The program has dual goals - to prepare Lawrence's youth for a lifetime of environmental leadership, and to develop community capacity to improve the physical environment. The Green Team is a year-long program. Over the summer, the Green Team participated in community service events with other Groundwork trusts, leadership and team work training, fieldtrips to various ecosystems including Thompson Island, Mt Cardigan, and Cape Cod. In addition the green team performed rapid ecological assessments (REA's) along the Spicket River and participated in environmental advocacy within the community of Lawrence.



Green Team Members 2007-2008

Back (left to right): Wilnely Rivera, Carter White (Team Leader), Luis Ortiz, Andres Cruz (Team Leader), Rebecca Veilleux (Education Mgr.), Chris Montes, Sacha Cruz, Sabrina Dorsainvail, David Mouzon

Front (left to right): Wanny Munoz, Jesenia Lopez, Jennifer Pagan, and Yvette Garcia

THOMPSON ISLAND

At the beginning of the summer, the Green Teams were able to meet and greet each other at Thompson Island. Here we learned how to be a leader and more importantly, how to work as a team. Through various team building activities, we practiced strategies that would bring us together cohesively. The most memorable activity was definitely the Alpine Wall. For many of us, it was the first time climbing. We didn't all make it to the top, but our lesson was learned: As a team, we can accomplish great things!



SERVICE DAYS

The first service day the Groundwork Lawrence Green Team attended was in Concord, NH. We saw some familiar faces because we had previously spent an overnight trip at Thompson Island and both Concord and Somerville Green Teams were there with us. We started off with an icebreaker in the park so everyone would get reacquainted. Then Groundwork Concord gave us an overview of what the day will be like. We then walked about a mile along a great trail and into downtown to an empty lot. The lot was very overgrown and needed a lot of work. They assigned each group different locations in the lot and we all got to work. We finished in about two and a half hours. The lot looked great! We were all so proud of what we accomplished. We attended two more service days in Lowell and Somerville. We also hosted one of our own. When we attended the Lowell Spindle City Service Day, we cleaned up a state park located in Lowell. We cut off branches and cleaned bike trails for the visitors. The park came out looking better than what it had been. The Somerville Service Day was very pleasant. We cleaned around the Boys and Girls Club. Most of the volunteers had the chance to go canoeing in the river and cleaned the river, too. It was very fun. Our Service Day was a mission. Our mission was to cut all the overgrown weeds and pick up all the trash in the Orchard- Garden Street Alleyway. It felt like mission impossible, but we succeeded. Our job was done, and the alleyway looked one hundred percent better than when we first took a look at it. It was very nice to help out other communities, and to have other communities helping us.



RAPID ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS

Throughout the summer of 2007, the Green Team performed Rapid Ecological Assessments (REA). REA's are a key part of the natural cities process. The assessments area designed to give the ecological health of a certain site in a short amount of time. This tells us which sites are in need of intervention. During our involvement with the Green Team we've implemented these assessments in various sites in Lawrence. Some particular sites in which we have tested are the Ferrous Site, Immigrant Place Park, the FEMA site, Dr. Nina Scarito Park, Misserville Skate Park, Hayden Schofield, and Steven's Pond. Each site is filled with various trees such as the American Elm, Silver Maple, Norwegian Maple, and Smooth Sumacs. There were birds such as Cardinals, Blue Herons, Mourning Doves, Finches, Thrashers, and American Robins. Concluding our summer experience with REA's we have learned that the majority of Lawrence's birds are mainly House Finches and American Robins.



DEN ROCK PARK

During this summer we dedicated two and a half weeks to Den Rock Park. Many of us had been oblivious to its existence in Lawrence. We spent our time there cleaning trails and beautifying the parking lot. We had fun using various tools such as the pull-saws, axes, and loppers. It was important to many of us to know that we could complete a common goal. We tried our best to clean up each trail and learn as much as we possibly could about the park. We began to understand the importance of the park itself. It has many plant species and is a home to many different types of animals. Living in Lawrence, all we seem to see are mills, homes, basketball courts, baseball fields and just plain dirt and gravel. Therefore all a “park” seemed to be was a baseball field, basketball court, or a pair of swings. Den Rock Park is a “park” and during this summer we realized how important it is to have a natural habitat in Lawrence. With our knowledge of Den Rock, we were able to give tour a group to children and to speak before the Lawrence City Council.

DEN ROCK AT CITY HALL

Den Rock Park is zoned as a recreational area therefore it could become just another baseball field. We as a team came before the Lawrence City Council Members to request permanent protection for Den Rock. We spoke about our experiences with the new knowledge we gained and voiced the park’s importance with thoughts that came from our hearts. Our efforts didn’t go unnoticed. A council member stated how wonderful it was to see the youth getting involved. During the meeting we were filled with emotions that ranged from excitement to nervousness. At the end of the night, Den Rock Park was deemed a “Conservation” area and no longer a “Recreational” area. The Green Team had made a difference as a team!



LOW-INCOME HOUSING VS LIQUOR STORE

Tuesday, September 18, 2007 several Green Team members attended a City Council meeting to support Lawrence Community Works (LCW). The meeting was held to decide if low-income housing or a liquor store should be granted the ownership of an empty lot on Newbury St. This battle was a difficult one and the meeting stretched on for almost an hour. The debate was over whether the city needed more homes or more jobs. Unfortunately the owners of the liquor store were granted the lot. As a group, the supporters of LCW walked out of City Hall with their signs and cheered. They reflected on the loss as a chance to come back and continue working toward their cause. Although they hadn't won they wouldn't forget the times they had and they would walk away respected as a group trying to help the community in the best way possible.

YOUTH SUMMIT 2007

Toward the end of the summer the Green Teams were able to come together for one last time with the other youth groups we had met throughout our summer experience. The Youth Summit, which was held in Lowell, was a chance to let each group express their experiences and share what they learned throughout the summer. We as the Green Team were given the opportunity to show a slide show and talk about our personal experiences during the summer. All the youth groups performed skits and showed slide shows. At the end of the summit there was an award ceremony in which certain awards were given to kids that had worked the hardest or showed the highest level of commitment. The Summit was a concluding get together and that gave us the privilege of seeing each other one last time before the start of school.



MT. CARDIGAN

I'm sure it happens to everyone when you must make a decision but your fears hold you back. When you feel ambivalent on what you want to accomplish and things in general just seem unclear. The Green Team was faced with several of these obstacles over the extent of our summer but the most difficult one was Mt. Cardigan. Wanting to end our summer on an unforgettable note the team took one last trip to the White Mountains as group hoping to experience something new together. Rebecca Veilleux our Education Manager presented us with a choice of either hiking to the summit of Mt. Cardigan or a smaller trail that leads to a waterfall nearby. After hearing the choices many of us were indecisive. Some of us were eager to hike to the summit while others weren't as enthused and preferred something less strenuous. Immediately the group seemed to split in half but as it did some of us realized that's not what we wanted. We wanted to finish this as a group, as a team we wanted to finish this together. That being said we talked amongst ourselves and came to the conclusion that we'd all be in this together. We started our summer adventures together and we all thought we should finish together as well. We all came to the conclusion that we were all going to reach the summit together. Starting off everyone was doing great but as the trail got steeper and time passed by a part of the team was falling behind. At this point we were having difficulties staying together as a group. Eventually we were split up again. There was a faster group ahead and then a slower one behind but that didn't seem to sit well with everyone. So we all came together and made some arrangements. What we decided was to encourage the slower people to move up front and faster people to disperse among the group in order to encourage those who needed it. As we got closer to the top more people felt like just giving up but we wouldn't let that happen. We kept on going even if the odds were against us at one point or another. It took us three hours to hike Mt. Cardigan and once we were on at the summit the view was beautiful. It finally all made sense, the arguments, the hard times, our memories and all our hardships they all meant something important to all of us. Everything that we went through showed us that we all need teamwork to accomplish our goals as a team. The hike to Mt. Cardigan was more than just a hike it was a memory and a keepsake that we'll keep with us forever.



THE SPICKET RIVER CLEANUP

The first time the Green Team came back together after the summer was for the Spicket River Cleanup. Each year, Groundwork Lawrence hosts this event and this year's was the largest cleanup yet. The 6th Annual Spicket River Cleanup took place on Saturday, September 15, 2007. About 700 volunteers showed up to the help this year. Many of the student volunteers came from Lawrence High, Phillips Academy, North Andover, Central Catholic, and many local businesses and organizations participated. Like previous years, people came together to help out with the most polluted river in Lawrence. Some of the things we found were car tires (over 200), rusted bicycles, a cut-open safe, a snow blower, and a bath tub. There were numerous things found that make you wonder "Why is this here? Or how could people be throwing things in the river?" We collect 17 tons of trash from a total of 8 sites. The Spicket River Cleanup, though it always rains, always turns out to be a success at the end of the day. People still go to the river to dump their trash, but knowing the amount of people that care about the environment and are willing to give up a Saturday to help out will hopefully be contagious throughout the community. From peoples' experiences of cleaning the river, many said that they felt proud of themselves because they knew they are doing something great for the community.

