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YMCA Earth Service Corps Annual Report 2018-2019

CHANGING OUR WORLD

YMCA Earth Service Corps Annual Report

Another action-packed and exciting school year has come to a close at Earth Service Corps. This year saw a dramatic expansion in the number of schools served by YESC and our biggest environmental events yet. Young people contributed time, passion, and energy to projects including growing school gardens, implementing classroom composting programs, advocating for environmental legislation, cleaning local beaches and waterways, achieving King County and Washington Green Schools Certifications, and restoring native habitats across King County.

YESC welcomed two additional AmeriCorps Program Instructors to the team this year, and through their dedicated outreach and community building, began serving nine additional high schools in Shoreline, Mercer Island, Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, and Seattle. I am excited our program is now directly serving and elevating more youth in our region.

Our Environmental Leaders Summit, a conference that brings together youth and environmental professionals to discuss environmental issues in the Puget Sound and spark action, brought together a record number of youth and professionals this December. Sharing space and inspiration with so many young people was my highlight from the year, and I am looking forward to expanding the event this fall.

I am impressed with what YESC youth have accomplished this year and excited to see what next year will bring!

Chelsey Wheeler
YMCA Earth Service Corps Director

YMCA Earth Service Corps
309 Pontius Ave N, Seattle, WA 98109
www.ymcaearthservicecorps.org

BY THE NUMBERS

Schools Represented in YESC: 53
Total Participants: 889
Service Hours: 8,860
Pudding “Dirt Cups” Eaten: 65

WHAT YOUTH SAY:

89% YESC made me more aware of environmental issues
85% After participating in YESC, I feel empowered to make a change in my community
89% YESC helped me develop a better appreciation of the natural environment
85% YESC led me to participate in activities that make my community a better place to live
78% YESC taught me to better communicate with others
90% After participating in YESC, I feel I can address real-world environmental issues

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION
GIVE A GIFT AT
YMCAEARTHSERVICECORPS.ORG

YMCA EARTH SERVICE CORPS
309 Pontius Avenue N, Seattle, WA 98109
Phone: 206.567.8116 Email: yesc@seattleymca.org Web: www.ymcaearthservicecorps.org
DEI VISION STATEMENT

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work is essential in cultivating a responsive, accountable, and more socially and environmentally just organization. We are pleased to announce that the YESC Advisory Board, after an extensive process drafting and incorporating input from YESC’s stakeholders, has developed the following YESC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Vision statement. This statement will guide and inform all aspects of our program as we continue to strengthen our culture of equity and empower young people as environmental leaders.

In YMCA Earth Service Corps, we support young people as they strengthen their sense of agency, increase their confidence, and expand their skill set to address the local and global issues of our time. In doing so, we collectively reinforce the connections between humans, the environment, and our communities.

We envision a society in which young people understand their role and impact in their environments and are included in decision-making processes—because they are impacted by the outcomes. We encourage young people to advocate for themselves and their communities in collaboration and dialogue with others of different backgrounds. With young people at the table, we broaden the scope of environmentalism to include social and environmental justice, human interconnectedness with ecosystems, and cultural values around nature.

The fundamental components of YMCA Earth Service Corps are service-learning, environmental education, leadership development, and cross-cultural awareness.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPS

“Who is thinking about participating in Envirothon this year?” Hands shoot up, and a burst of excited conversation starts. “Last year we came in second at State and this year we want to win!” This chorus rang through the room, and last year’s team regarded the club with stories of beaver dams and identifying local trees. The Envirothon competition tests youth knowledge and hands-on skills in a variety of environmental science subjects, including aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, soils, and land use. Since February, the Ingraham Envirothon team has met every Tuesday morning to prepare for the Envirothon Competition, learning about Western Washington’s natural resources by learning local wildlife tracks, how to measure a tree’s height, and exploring stream ecology.

The team won the Regional competition in March and competed at State in May. After rotating through testing stations and presenting a hypothetical farm plan, it was time for the State awards ceremony. The Ingraham team eagerly waited to see how many hours of work they would pay off. “The top team in forestry, soils, wildlife and the special topic, Ingraham High School. Competition winners, Ingraham High School. Congratulations!” Rosy cheeks and huge toothy smiles shone through as the team made their way to the stage.

The team, all seniors, graduated in June but are still dedicating time to study and prepare for their trip to the National competition in North Carolina in early August. We are excited to support them as they compete at Nationals. Good luck, Ingraham!

REFLECTIONS ON TEAMWORK

Dennis has been a member of Eastlake High School’s Environmental Club since freshman year, and the one word that keeps surfacing as he shares about his time with the club is “team.” As a senior and club Treasurer, he reflects on the critical lessons in teamwork that his involvement in YESC has taught him. He notes that one of his most successful projects engaged school administration to support improvements in the compost system at Eastlake. Administrators responded to youth requests committing to fix broken waste streams and properly dispose of compost. Dennis explains that as a leader tackling this project, he was successful because he had a team behind him who were as invested in the goal as he was.

Dennis credits YESC, and his experience in club, for teaching him how to work on a team. He says teamwork is the key to accomplish your goal: “With a well-coordinated team, you can accomplish a lot more... and have fun with it.” Dennis also cites the club energy as a big factor in their success, noting that “we all have the same passion, amplified by each other.” As he graduates, he will carry the importance of teamwork along with him. In the same way that past club leaders have inspired him with their passionate energy, composure, and patience, Dennis now also serves as a model environmental leader for the team he leaves behind.

Dennis shared his story with YESC at the end of the school year. He is one of hundreds of young people that participated in YESC this year, building community, connecting with both the environment and each other, discovering passions, and making a lasting impact.

THANK YOU!

Earth Service Corps can only achieve all of these accomplishments with the generous support of the following volunteers. A Big thanks to each of you!

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Taysha Hubbard

Joelle Nelson
Tracy Landebo

Joseph Sowaj

“YESC gives us the opportunity to do community service and learn more about the Earth.”

—Franklin HS Student

“YESC helps me learn how to help the environment in my daily life, learn leadership skills, meet people with similar interests, and have fun.”

—Roosevelt HS Student

“YESC is making a positive impact on my life because it teaches me to care for the earth’s resources and help others understand the impact they have.”

—Joanita HS Student

“One new thing I learned about myself this year is that I am capable of voicing my thoughts about things I take pride in. Before, I feared the concept of public speaking and would isolate myself from conversations and presentations. However, working with a group of individuals in YESC on a topic that truly interests me has allowed me to improve my speaking skills as well as my confidence.”

—Hazan HS Student

“VOICES OF YESC

“It was very empowering to be able to implement change in our school.”

—Redmond HS Student

“Thank you!”

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