



## Groundwork Catalyst

### Roger Osorio

*“If you give someone else the opportunity I had. Just go to a school and talk to one person, hopefully they fall in love with it as much as I have, and hopefully they’ll tell their friends about it. One person will tell two people and that group and it just grows.”*

**What drives Roger Osorio is the idea of expansion:** since joining the Groundwork Hudson Valley (GWHV) Green Team in 2009, he has expanded his environmental knowledge & cultural awareness through travel & hard work, and he has chosen to share that wisdom to develop his peers.

Within weeks of joining GWHV, his own journey of growth began: “Here I am, not knowing much about the organization [GWHV]...and I get on the plane, go to Milwaukee for a weekend and have an amazing experience. The memories are still there.” Those travel memories didn’t stop at Milwaukee. Roger proceeded to attend two more Groundwork USA Youth Summits: one in Anacostia, D.C., where he spoke before the EPA, and on Capitol Hill, as a student ambassador from GWHV & Groundwork USA; and the other in New Orleans, where Roger and a friend on the Green Team assisted a school devastated by Hurricane Katrina in building rain gardens.

Rogers expects his travels to continue. After college graduation, he and his teammates will fulfill a vow they made during their first year on the Green Team to hike the entire Appalachian Trail—a section of which they’ve maintained throughout their Green Team years.

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But Roger didn’t always have the travel bug he has today. One summer during his youth, his mom took him to the Dominican Republic where she grew up: “I remember thinking to myself ‘I hate this, I hate being outside. I wanna go home, I want to go to the city, I want to be in air conditioning. But then here I am years later working outside and loving it and wanting other people to do it. Groundwork completely changed my point of view.”

GWHV provided Roger with several opportunities to change his perspective, including the construction of a stone wall on the Old Croton Aqueduct (OCA) Trail in Dobb’s Ferry, NY “It was horrible work, and we were tired and exhausted, but after we were done, we couldn’t help but take pictures and think ‘we did this’ and just be amazed at what we did.”

Self-accomplishment, Roger says, is what pushes him to recruit for the GWHV Green Team. “He is our biggest advocate at Riverside High School, rallying the team

members to support Groundwork for a number of events,” says Curt Collier, Deputy Director at GWHV. Since his first year, the number of GWHV Green Team applicants has grown from 20 to 54, much in part to the encouragement he gives to new recruits. “I look at them and say ‘this is the honest truth: when we’re done you’re gonna look at it and say ‘I did this’. And every time they’re done, they pull me aside and say ‘that’s amazing’.”

**“IF YOU CAN GET ONE PERSON TO GET INVOLVED, OR CATCH ONE PERSON’S EYE, THEN YOU’VE WON.”**

Roger’s time with GWHV, he feels, is helping to get his foot in the door to more exciting opportunity. In a visit to Harper’s Ferry National Historic Park, he realized how reachable an enjoyable job was after speaking with a park ranger, “He told me how he loves his job...that you could travel, and see the beauty of nature. I asked ‘what’s your college degree in?’ and he said ‘I majored in history.’ And I said ‘well I’m majoring in history! I could do this!’”. His plan is to major in history, become a history teacher, and save every summer to work in a national park, encouraging younger generations to fall in love with the same opportunity he had.

