Groundwork USA Corps Experience in Yellowstone National Park

Update From The Field – Friday August 23, 2013

Twenty youth representing nine Trusts from across the Groundwork USA network have gathered for the second annual Groundwork USA Corps Experience in Yellowstone National Park. GWUSA working with Yellowstone/National Park Service’s Judy Knuth-Folts (Deputy Chief of Resource Education and Youth Programs) and Bob Furhmann (Youth and Volunteer Program Manager) created the program funded largely by a generous grant from NPS. The goal of the week-long program is to provide diverse youth with the opportunity to work in Yellowstone alongside park professionals on a variety of projects and to tour this magnificent park.

The youth were met at the Bozeman, MT airport by Mike Coonan, director of the park’s Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program as well as other YCC staff who transported the Groundwork youth up to the YCC facility located in the Mammoth Hot Springs area of the park. Once there, and after a dip in a chilly mountain lake, the youth were given presentations on Yellowstone as well as on a variety of topics to make their time at the park more valuable. The highlight of the training included a presentation by renowned Bear Management Specialist Kerry Gunther who gave a detailed presentation on bear safety. Needless to say the youth asked a thousand questions. Mr. Gunther then took the youth outside to practice using bear spray (using a harmless inert gas instead of the concentrated pepper spray) on some volunteer “bears.”
The youth have been divided into work crews and, led by YCC staff, have begun work on a number of projects including installing bear boxes (to stop bears from stealing food from campers), axing timber to make “bumper logs” to keep tourist vehicles off sensitive roadside habitats, doing trail work, and removing materials from a geyser basin. As the youth have been returning after a full day of work, their stories also include sightings of bison, elk, eagles and falcons.
This weekend the youth will be traveling around Yellowstone to see its many wondrous sights, including stops at Old Faithful, the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone, and tours of areas frequented by the park’s famed large mammals.

The Trusts represented at the park are Groundwork Somerville (MA), Hudson Valley (NY), Bridgeport (CT), Anacostia River D.C., Dallas, Milwaukee, Dona Ana (NM), Denver, and Portland, OR. More updates to follow.

Reported by:

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