STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

2016 IMPACT

SCA COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS
5,565

TOTAL SCA PARTICIPANTS
9,638

SCA FIELD MEMBERS
4,073

600
SERVICE SITES
IN ALL 50 STATES

SCA VOLUNTEERS IMPROVED
PLACES THAT ARE HOME TO
OR VISITED BY MORE THAN

220 MILLION PEOPLE

1.3 MILLION HOURS
OF CONSERVATION
SERVICE

CONSERVING LANDS

Provided **900,000** people with environmental education

Restored nearly **180,000** acres of land

Improved more than **10 Million** feet of trail

Protected more than **3 Million** feet of shoreline

Built or maintained over **20,000** structures

Supported over **450,000** native plants & animals

TRANSFORMING LIVES

92% are more **empowered to protect parks**

79% plan to **volunteer in their communities** after SCA

88% feel more **prepared for their next job**

84% are better able to **work within a team**

77% are more **certain about their career paths**

79% are better able to **lead other people**

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LIKE THE WORLD AROUND US, THE STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION HAS CHANGED A GREAT DEAL SINCE OUR FOUNDING NEARLY 60 YEARS AGO.

When Liz Putnam—then a college sophomore herself—boldly mobilized a volunteer force of young Americans, she did so to safeguard a national park system at risk of being "loved to death."

Today, our public lands and the environment in general face a complex range of threats from climate change to development. At the same time, our society is struggling with the disconnect between youth and nature, the dominance of technology in our lives and the need to unite an increasingly diverse population.

Over the decades, SCA has evolved, innovating to address the changing needs of our parks and forests and responding to the many trends and interests affecting our nation's youth.

Presently, that means empowering young adults who are capable of navigating multi-dimensional challenges as well as opportunities. This certainly includes "building conservation leaders," as specified in our mission, and it extends well beyond that.

America now needs emerging leaders who harbor the same pioneering spirit that fueled Liz Putnam's drive six decades ago and which continues to inspire today. We need passionate change agents guided by SCA's core values including service, stewardship and inclusivity. We need leaders in every sense of the word.

SCA's hands-on, outdoor experiences light a fuse in young people, igniting an array of vital character-building traits: confidence, critical thinking, perseverance, teamwork and more. They also light the way to a lifetime of growth and professional success. And, yes, they enable young people to tap into their potential and scale to new heights of leadership.

Through their work in wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration, sustainability and other fields, SCA volunteers have a significant impact on our natural and cultural legacy. In the process, the service they render and the insights they gain also have a powerful impact on them. This transformation occurs not alongside their SCA service but because of it. And that is what sets SCA uniquely apart and enables us to remain the youth service leader of choice for resource managers, foundations and philanthropists, and—above all—impressionable teens and young adults.

As we recap in this report, SCA is strengthening our career development programs, expanding our urban conservation initiatives and piloting new engagement strategies to build an ever-larger and more inclusive cadre of young people to lead our parks and our people into the future. And next year—which will officially mark our 60th anniversary—we will launch new, transformative experiences and exciting new partnerships that will expand SCA's impact even further.

We are tremendously grateful for your continued support. We also acknowledge the unyielding efforts of the SCA Board of Directors, the President's Council, our Alumni Council and SCA's national and regional staff. Finally, we salute the thousands upon thousands of young people who, through their volunteerism and grit, create a healthier planet and a more hopeful tomorrow. Thank you.

Jaime B. Matyas

JAIME BERMAN MATYAS President and CEO

Developing Youth, Empowering Leaders

In 2016, even as SCA engaged a record number of young people in service to nature, we refined our programs to maximize their impact on individuals' development. As cited in a three-year study by the Search Institute, an international authority on what youth need to succeed, SCA experiences strengthen volunteers' most influential life skills and fuel continuous growth through adulthood.

These character advancements are over and above our targeted conservation leadership traits; the Search Institute also found significant gains in members' ability to work with others, an enhanced sense of responsibility, and a greater desire to persevere, among other improvements. Analyses indicate key factors in this transformation include peer interaction and adult mentorship, as well as inspiring outdoor settings, challenging team-based projects and opportunities for reflection.

Search experts also determined that members who developed a strong sense of mattering through their SCA experience were four times more likely to stretch themselves beyond their comfort zones and practice conservation leadership. "How one comes to feel like they 'matter' is through relationships," explained senior research scientist Dr. Amy Syvertsen. "It's by expressing care, challenging growth… all those things are a part of it."

Perhaps the most important discovery, however, is that these unique outcomes occur not alongside our volunteers' service but because of it.

"The study showed that SCA participants develop a constellation of skills for success," said SCA Director of Evaluation Strategy Kate Hagner. "There was significant positive change in pretty much every area measured, which is highly uncommon. It tells us that SCA is a change agent for the environment as well as communities."

Moving forward, SCA will continue to collect and analyze data to continuously improve its programs and foster the skills youth need to thrive as leaders in the conservation movement and the world at large.

As we do, SCA's impact on young lives will rival our impact on the land.

Celebrating National Parks

As the National Park Service commemorated its 100th anniversary, its priorities included broadening its constituency and increasing the ranks of park volunteers. To accomplish these goals, the Park Service turned to the same service partner it's relied on for more than half its history: SCA.

SCA deployed 180 Centennial Volunteer Ambassadors to national parks and historic sites across the country, where these young adults reached into neighboring communities, engaged visitors and organized large-scale volunteer projects.

"The Centennial celebration must focus as much on our future as on our past," said National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis. "We are excited that young people, including our Centennial Volunteer Ambassadors, are stepping up as the next generation of conservation leaders."

The Ambassadors hit the ground running and never slowed down, providing over 240,000 hours of service to national parks and connecting with 121,000 visitors through education and outreach, including more than 15,000 volunteers. In addition to hosting service projects on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Earth Day and similar dates on the calendar, Ambassadors showcased their parks in events such as the Rose Bowl Parade and Mardi Gras.

"I have always volunteered. It's made me a better person and I've been able to help others," stated Diandré Watkins of Maryland, a Centennial Ambassador serving at the National Mall and Memorial Parks in Washington, DC. "Our national parks form the common ground that unites us as a people and I want to make sure that all Americans see their stories in national parks."

Eighty-eight percent of participating parks reported seeing increased community engagement, and many Ambassadors were added to permanent staffs to extend the welcomed momentum.

This anniversary initiative is just one way in which SCA and the Park Service are creating a workforce for the parks' next 100 years.

Seven new national parks were established in 2016, bringing the total number up to 58. Several national monuments were also created.

Valles Caldera National Preserve
NEW MEXICO

•

First State National Historical Park
DELAWARE

•

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
MASSACHUSETTS & RHODE ISLAND

•

Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial
WASHINGTON, D.C.

•

Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument
NEVADA

•

Pinnacles National Park
CALIFORNIA

•

Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park
KENTUCKY

Kahmia Moise

I BROUGHT GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA TO NYC PRIDE!!!

The idea first sparked in my head last year as an SCA intern in Washington, DC. It was the beginning of June, Pride Month, and rainbows were everywhere. I was sure I was going to see the National Park Service in the Pride Parade, given the Interior Department's new LGBTQ Heritage Initiative, but I didn't. So that became my goal as an SCA NPS Centennial Ambassador.

My supervisor and another SCA intern also were keen to participate in PrideFest at NYC Pride and, together, we made it happen. We put together a display, gathered brochures and sign-up sheets, packed up a suitcase and were on our way.

We arrived at Abingdon Square 9:00 a.m. sharp and set up our tent, table and #FindYourPark banner. The weather was a bit dreary at first—grey, chilly, and misty—but fortunately, it didn't hold many people back, and we welcomed everyone to our table.

We spoke with folks about Gateway National Recreation Area, National Parks of New York Harbor, and the National Park Service Centennial. We shared information about the LGBTQ Initiative, about "Play, Learn, Serve, and Work," and about the need for youth to become future stewards of the parks.

We spoke to over 200 people! Twenty-six signed up to become volunteers and many more acknowledged us as they walked by. Eventually, even the sun came out to join us.

All in all, it was a tremendous success and we are already planning to make an even bigger impression next year. Stay tuned!

Fostering a More Inclusive Conservation Community

SCA's job training programs, including our NPS Academy with the National Park Service and the Career Discovery Internship Program (CDIP) with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, place young adults from all backgrounds on a potent professional pathway. At the same time, these initiatives assist our resource management partners in fielding a talented workforce that reflects the nation's rich diversity.

At Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Vermont, intern Christie Merino helped develop a sweeping strategy for mitigating climate impacts. "I performed a lot of energy audits, calculating emissions on a park-wide level, by sector and by building," she noted. "It was pretty complicated, but it was awesome."

The data Christie compiled informed operational decisions and justified green infrastructure enhancements. She also created public education tools to showcase the park's many advances. "The high-efficiency wood boiler is a perfect example," Christie said. "The park harvests wood from its sustainably managed forest, and I turned jargon, numbers and graphs into something that connected with visitors on a deeper level."

At Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, CDIP intern Sarika Khanwilkar similarly incorporated public education into her responsibilities as a self-dubbed "Turtle Scout." By night, she patrolled beaches in search of nesting loggerheads; by day, she shared her experiences with visitors—often via vivid entries on the SCA blog.

"Suddenly, as we were waiting for the first turtle to start digging, the carapace of another enormous turtle emerged from the water's edge only feet from where we were sitting!" wrote Sarika. "When she was done laying, she used her back flippers to cover the egg chamber up. We were close enough that she coated us in sand!"

Sarika later declared she was "forever changed...I have fallen in love with discovering the diversity that inhabits this planet."

These are but two examples of how SCA combines hands-on experience and natural passion to empower diverse young conservation leaders.

Restoring a Revered Coastline

In 1958, United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas led a hike at Olympic National Park to protest a planned highway that many feared would ruin the park's wild coastline. Among the invited eco-advocates was a young woman who was already making a name for herself in conservation circles: Liz Putnam.

Nearly 60 years later, SCA was still defending Olympic National Park by removing tons of harmful marine debris, thanks to a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Four crews, comprised of eight to ten teenagers and two experienced field leaders, were tasked with clearing a large portion of Olympic's 73-mile-long coastline, from Shi Shi beach to the Hoh River. The teams hauled away mattress-sized chunks of Styrofoam, appliances and car parts, as well as smaller items such as buoys, plastic bottles and ropes. They also collected and catalogued items such as oyster spacer tubes and plastic shotgun shells—specific objects being studied by NOAA researchers looking into possible accumulation patterns and density levels.

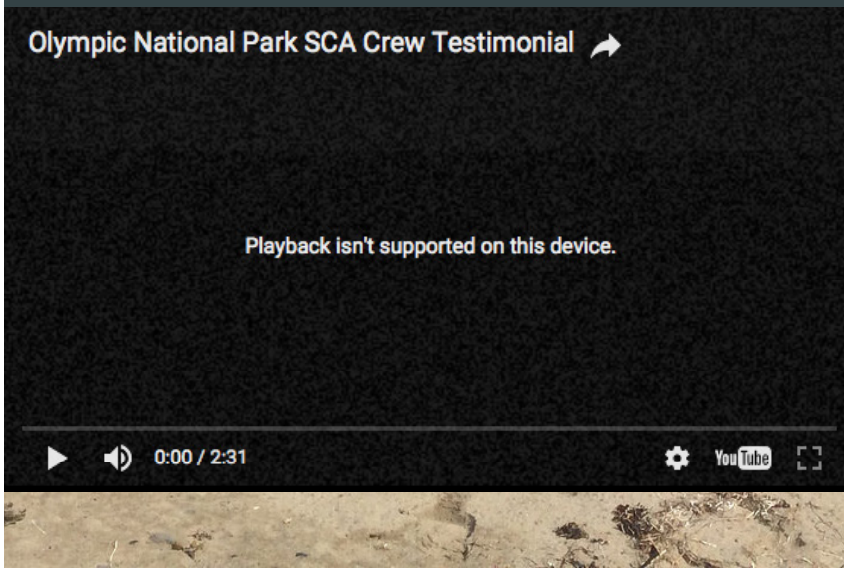
The teams lived in tents pitched on the beach for two weeks at a time, and gathered and hauled thousands of pieces of litter per day, an effort that yielded more than one learning moment. "I am realizing I should use less plastic in my daily life," said crew member Maya Gonzales.

Olympic Superintendent Sarah Creachbaum credited the crews with improving "the ecologic and scenic integrity of over seventy miles of wild Pacific Ocean coastline...As a result, diverse wildlife resources including critical, sensitive and endangered species will be better protected and the public's enjoyment of the coast will be improved."

As he headed up-trail with a final load of debris strapped to his back, crew member Grant Williamson uttered "It gives me an unmistakable sense of pride to look over my shoulder at a beach we had cleaned."

Olympic and Grand Teton National Parks hosted the first SCA volunteers nearly six decades ago. A total of 53 students served in 1957; by the end of 2016, SCA had more than 80,000 alumni worldwide. Just east of Olympic, Seattle is home to one of SCA's largest and longest-running urban conservation initiatives.

See SCA's Olympic crew reflect on their work.



Jeremy Taitano

Jeremy, a 21-year old Temple University student, is a multi-time SCA volunteer who was featured this year in The North Face's Never Stop campaign in recognition of his determination and active outdoor stewardship.

What has SCA meant to you?

As a teen, I spent a lot of time flailing, unsure of who I was as a person, what my values were, and what to do with my emotional energy. Then, SCA caught hold of me. I believe outdoor spaces can inspire, empower, and bring us together as a people.

You've served in eight SCA positions in five years…

Yeah, five years that have given me leadership and outdoor experience. I want to take what I have learned and use those lessons to inspire others, and to become a better person to my planet and my fellow human beings.

Three of your hitches were in Washington, DC…

Urban parks are my favorite. I'm a huge fan of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens. Because of their accessibility, urban parks can spark passion for the outdoors and conservation in people who would otherwise be estranged from wilderness.

How did growing up on Saipan affect you?

That's where my father's family comes from. The island's reefs and beaches gave me an appreciation for climate change and sea level rise. I want to do anything I can so future generations can go on enjoying the beauty and pleasure that only Earth can give.

Researchers say SCA is transformative. Do you agree?

Yes. I believe in youth development through contact with the natural world. I believe in public lands' ability to transform lives. Helping all people to realize that they have a place in our public lands is something SCA recognizes and does well to facilitate.

Steeling Climate Resiliency

When the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted its global plan on greenhouse gases, the accord became known as the Paris Agreement—a nod to the city that hosted the meeting. As urban populations and resource consumption grow, cities are at the forefront of climate change mitigation efforts and, in SCA's case, there's no better example than Pittsburgh.

Over a recent 12-month period, Pittsburgh-area businesses generated $8 million in energy savings, reduced carbon emissions by 4,821 metric tons and saved 5.4 million gallons of water—enough to fill Heinz Field. At the same time, city homeowners kept more than one million pounds of carbon-dioxide equivalent out of the atmosphere by reducing power and water usage.

As SCA Sustainability Manager Miriam Parson noted in a post-Paris column in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, a large percentage of these accomplishments were "driven by SCA volunteers working with local partners to advance Pittsburgh's Climate Action Plan and forge a more sustainable future."

In 2016, SCA Sustainability Fellows joined forces with local governments, corporations, nonprofit organizations, schools and neighborhoods to reduce climate-changing pollution.

The Fellows conducted greenhouse-gas emission inventories, implemented storm water catchment projects, and advanced city-wide recycling, alternative transportation and tree canopy initiatives, among many other contributions.

"In the midst of its extraordinary comeback," Miriam wrote, "this region has turned climate resiliency into a rallying point for revitalization and economic development. And as our young people will inherit whatever lies ahead, good or bad, SCA is proud of the accomplishments of our Sustainability Fellows in collaboration with Pittsburgh leaders."

Launching New York's New Corps

"The Excelsior Conservation Corps will offer young New Yorkers the opportunity to gain skills and training while addressing some of our state's most pressing environmental needs. This initiative will help ensure New York becomes cleaner and greener than ever before."

With those words, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a new statewide partnership with the Student Conservation Association. SCA was appointed to run the Corps, which in its first year engaged 50 young adults in a wide range of ecological enterprises.

In partnership with AmeriCorps, Excelsior Conservation Corps members waded through rivers to conduct mussel surveys, constructed an ADA-approved trail near Lake George, and cleared invasive Barberry from Letchworth State Park, voted the best state park in the country.

In Long Island's Connetquot River State Park, Corps members thinned the thousands of trees lost to the southern pine beetle. The Department of Environmental Conservation estimates 80% of the park's pines are now dead and threaten the many hikers, runners and birders who frequent the park. As Newsday reported, "It's mournful work, like a requiem, but they're proud to do it…Connetquot needs them."

Nick Murray, an Army veteran from Oyster Bay, NY, said the Excelsior Corps offered him the opportunity to "earn back the right to be an American citizen…this is just another way I can serve my country and my state."

At the same time, Pittsburgh and Allegheny County parks officials joined forces with SCA to field a new group of rangers assigned to provide visitor information, lead outdoor activities, and serve as "ambassadors."

At every level of government, all across the country, SCA volunteers help resource managers meet their most crucial conservation objectives.

SCA's New York office relocated this year to the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve—and the same campus where then-Vassar College student Liz Putnam first proposed a "student conservation corps" in her senior thesis.

PROFILES IN CONSERVATION

Kailon Lang

Kailon Lang did his third SCA tour this year. Following two summers as a Chicago crew member, the 19-year old returned as an apprentice crew leader to help high school-aged youth gain the knowledge, skills and perspectives he picked up through his earlier SCA experiences.

"I'M GETTING MORE CONFIDENT EACH DAY," KAILON SAID. "I really like my leaders at Dan Ryan Woods. The more we're together, the better our chemistry gets, and that will lead to future success."

Nationwide, SCA's urban conservation initiatives engage more than 1,000 often-underserved teenagers in green summer jobs and professional training. The apprentice crew leader position is a key part of the SCA conservation continuum that offers increasingly challenging service-learning experiences to aid individual growth and career readiness. Our Chicago program got a huge boost through a multi-year, million dollar grant from BP America.

Kailon headlined the news conference announcing the grant, sharing a stage with Mayor Rahm Emanuel, BP America President John Mingé and others. "I now have a better understanding of how nature intertwines with our world and how every living thing contributes to it," Kailon said.

In its first year, the BP support created 125 summer jobs. Along the Calumet River, teens restored erosion, removed invasive species and conducted tree health surveys in collaboration with Cook County Forest Preserve and Friends of the Forest Preserves.

Additionally, SCA interns provided Chicagoland K-12 students with free environmental education and outdoor activities through its Urban Tree House, while another SCA team restored portions of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore's Great Marsh, an important stop for migratory birds.

"I thank both BP and SCA," said Mayor Emanuel, "for expanding urban conservation initiatives throughout Chicago, in turn benefiting the environment, transforming lives and enhancing the well-being of our community."

The Trail of Technology

BY RACHEL HEDGES

A few years ago, I left a career in advertising to earn a degree in natural resources management. One of my main reasons was that I needed a job where I could work outside. I love hiking. I love building trails, measuring trees, using tools, and all of the other wonderful things that for the last four years I've gotten to do under the guise of "work" (Including leading two amazing SCA crews!).

So, this year, when I accepted the position of senior GIS intern for San Mateo County Parks, the irony that about 80% of my job would consist of sitting inside at a computer was not lost on me. Why, then, did I jump at this opportunity? Because I knew that I would constantly be learning, and that GIS technology would allow the parks department to manage its lands in the best way possible.

GIS stands for Geographic Information System—a very short name for something that does a lot. As defined by the US Geological Survey, a GIS "is a computer system capable of displaying geographically referenced information, that is, data identified according to location. A GIS [also includes] the procedures, operating personnel, and spatial data that go into the system." Perplexed?

All that means that San Mateo County Parks can track threatened and endangered species like never before—updating maps with information not only with their locations, but also with their quantities, characteristics, and behaviors. We can see how much native riparian area has been lost to invasive species from year to year, and we can track how effective restoration efforts are in that same area.

We can use infrared imagery to see how much heat a tree is emitting, which tells us how healthy that tree is—or more importantly, isn't. And we can share this information clearly and visually through the maps that GIS programs allow us to create.

I'm lucky enough to share this new tool set with local students as I lead an SCA crew in data collection efforts at one of the county's largest parks. The information we gather will provide data for the parks department's geodatabase that will be used for years to come. So even though we may not be building a trail or tearing out invasive species, the work we do now will have a lasting legacy for San Mateo County Parks.

Data Driven.

Thirty-six members of the SCA GIS crews delivered some serious numbers:

37,064
feet of trail inventoried and maintained

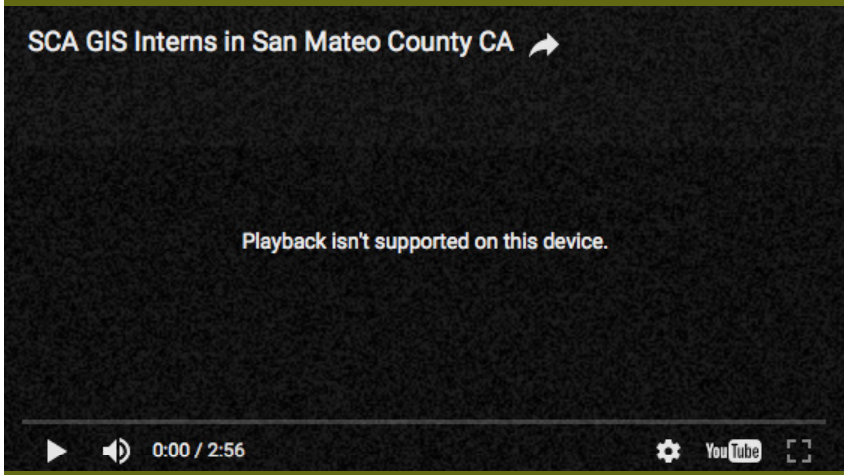
1,980
trail features mapped

663
park buildings mapped

34,320
feet of waterfront catalogued

33
acres of habitat cleared of invasive plants

SCA's GIS team discusses their work and impact.



Innovating New Routes to Stewardship

SCA's mission is "to build the next generation of conservation leaders," and as part of that charge, we're also building a larger and more inclusive conservation community. In 2016, and in partnership with American Express, SCA's ConSERVE projects went from a trial run to a full-fledged sprint.

In cities from coast to coast, these high-impact events, held on national days of service such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Earth Day and September 11th, attracted hundreds of hard-working volunteers, got a lot of work done fast, and promoted ongoing service and stewardship. And by focusing on municipal parks, SCA was able to catalyze connections between people from every sector of the community and the nature in their own neighborhoods.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell and National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis joined more than 600 SCA volunteers at a massive, MLK Day waterfront clean-up at Anacostia Park in Washington, DC. "When Franklin Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps," Jewell said, "that effort changed the lives of millions of Americans. The Student Conservation Association is really the CCC Two-Point-Oh. SCA is reaching out to young people and saying, 'these public lands are here for you.' Thank goodness for their good work!"

A few months later, SCA Earth Day projects drew nearly 1,500 volunteers—82% of whom were young people—who removed five tons of trash and debris from 20,500 acres of parkland. Site officials are grateful for the extra help.

"With so many hands, the work volunteers were able to complete in this one service day would have taken our park staff months," said Julie Kutruff, Community Outreach and Partnership Manager for the National Park Service.

For young people, ConSERVE events have proven to be a crucial introductory moment that allows youth to experience the outdoors in a whole new way. "This was the first time I ever planted a tree!" exclaimed 12-year-old Bronx resident Kywayne Farquaharson. And, he vowed, it would not be his last.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

American Express

THIS YEAR SCA LAUNCHED A DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICAN EXPRESS to mobilize thousands of volunteers to protect public lands across the U.S. To commemorate the National Park Service Centennial, SCA engaged more than 6,400 community members who dedicated more than 25,000 hours to conserving and revitalizing 200,000 acres of public land and green space in Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

The American Express Foundation's support of SCA was part of an overall campaign to encourage millions of children to play, learn, serve and work outdoors, with particular emphasis on reaching the Department of the Interior's goal of supporting one million volunteers annually on public lands. This effort included the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps as well as the Find Your Park/Encuentra Tu Parque movement.

"We know parks and public lands play an important role in attracting visitors and supporting vibrant communities," said the American Express Foundation President Timothy McClimon at New York City's Van Cortlandt Park. "We're thrilled to join forces with SCA to deploy volunteers to protect and revitalize some of America's treasured parks."

At a "servabration" event on the National Mall, SCA Centennial Volunteer Ambassador Ayomide Sekiteri, brought the crowd to their feet with her stirring address. "I am here to break the myth that young people, and especially young people of color, don't care about national parks or, for that matter, nature. My experiences with SCA and NPS have helped me immensely in my journey of self-discovery.

"I know my history can be found in national parks and I sense my future can be too. I'm here to exercise my right to enjoy these awe-inspiring places, as well as my responsibility to care for them. I'm here because I found my park and now, I want you to find your park!"

Creating Careers in Alaska

With more than 225 million acres of public land, it should come as no surprise that Alaska hosts more SCA volunteers than any other state.

This year, SCA fielded 11 conservation crews in the state. These included eight teams of teenagers from throughout Alaska. The distances, costs and other challenges involved in accessing many parts of the state mean that Alaska youth don't explore outside their villages or spend extended time away from home. Accordingly, we augment their SCA experience by collaborating with community organizations to bring in guest speakers including scientists, historians and Native Elders to help volunteers reconnect with the local land, culture and heritage.

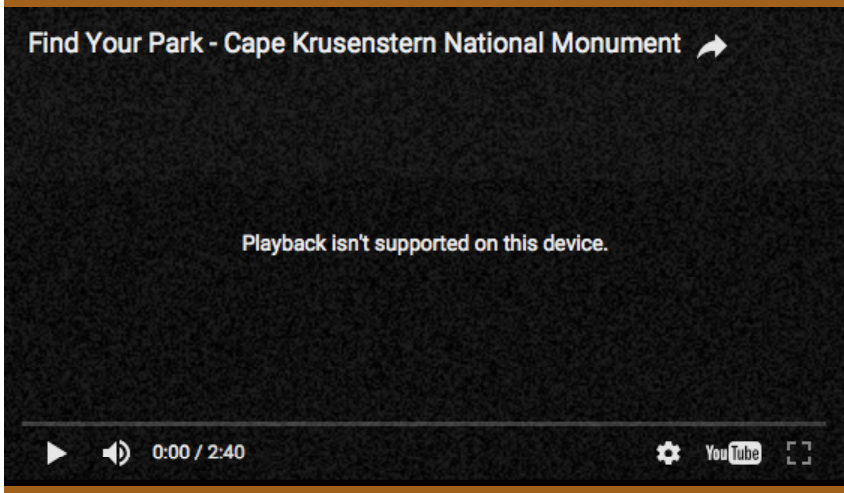
"I love working in new environments, meeting new faces, and learning more skills that could help in the future," stated four-time SCA alumna Laura McDowell at Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. "You can have an adventure by making trails, or even just giving lessons to kids."

Career training is another important aspect of SCA's Alaska programming. We work in partnership with resource managers and Native Alaska corporations to help volunteers hone new skills and create professional opportunities where prospects can often be limited.

Last spring, we held our annual NPS Academy orientation at Kenai Fjords National Park, acquainting dozens of young Alaskans with a range of Park Service job options, from wildlife management to facilities and operations. Later, those same individuals served in summer internships, gaining the practical experience necessary to join park staffs.

In all, some 250 young people contributed to protecting Alaska's natural and cultural assets this year. Deputy Interior Secretary Mike Connors lauded the SCA members he met at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. "SCA is providing valuable business and outdoor skills and conservation training," Connors stated. "These dynamic young people are indeed becoming future champions and protectors of our public resources."

Watch this video by SCA Alaska member Macy Kenworth



Triggering "Ah-Ha" Moments in Chicago Classrooms

For a child, few places pack the wonder of a tree house. As the youngster climbs, the imagination soars and even the stars seem within reach.

Last fall, SCA brought its Urban Tree House to Chicagoland. A unique environmental education curriculum, the Urban Tree House (UTH) connects city kids with the natural world around them…a world that for many was still undiscovered.

"There were so many 'ah-ha' moments," recalled UTH instructor Diana Sanborn. "To see the looks on their faces, all the excitement. It was really impactful."

In just its first semester, the program engaged nearly 3,000 K-12 Chicago public school students. The program is offered free, thanks to underwriting from BP America.

"The activities are well thought out and developed, and the interest level of students has definitely increased," noted Yollande Gottlieb, a fifth grade teacher on Chicago's North Side.

Triggering the brains of students across such a broad age range can be challenging but Diana, with the aid of two SCA interns, made it look easy. With kindergarteners, for example, she distributed toy fishing poles outfitted with magnets instead of hooks. Metal fish of various sizes and colors represent the ocean's diversity and, as the children reeled in their catches, the conversation turned to sustainable fishing.

In older classes, Diana had students stand in a group and draw cards bearing the names of different animals and plants. Then she used a ball of yarn to spin a "web of life" and show how all species are interconnected and what happens if even one of them disappears.

"Many students are unfamiliar with basic concepts like extinction," Diana said. "Children today are spending more and more time with iPads, computers and TV. They're missing out on a whole part of learning. We're helping them understand the need to conserve the environment for generations to come."

PROFILES IN CONSERVATION

Christopher Fernandez

One SCA crew in high school is all it took to convince Christopher to major in environmental and conservation biology. Currently a junior at George Mason University, Christopher is a regular at SCA service events.

Why do you continue to serve?

I serve because we are all responsible for being stewards of our planet—there is no Planet-B! I believe that the protection of nature and preservation of life go hand-in-hand, and because I have hope in humanity's role in safeguarding the blessings of nature for generations to come.

What's the magic about SCA service projects?

It's so rewarding to bring everyone together, and for so many people to say they'll come back. They'll return for another event, but they'll also come back to enjoy the park throughout the year.

What's your most memorable SCA experience?

Participating in SCA's Career Discovery Internship Program. I served at the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, where I met people from all over the nation and made so many wonderful friends. After that, I decided to become an Alumni Ambassador and have been mentoring other students interested in wildlife and conservation at my university.

What comes after graduation?

My short-term goal is to continue gaining experience in field biology, research, and data management. My long-term goal is to work as a conservation biologist with an agency or institution and teaching students about how they can be environmental stewards in their own communities.

OUR SUPPORTERS

The Liz Putnam Legacy Society

Anonymous (27)
Deanne Adams and Anthony Sisto
Estate of Mary L. Alchian
Alan and Helen Appleford
Kenneth and Delma Baldridge
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SCA's Liz Putnam Legacy Society

The Liz Putnam Legacy Society serves to recognize and thank those who have taken the special step of providing for the future of SCA's youth conservation service work by supporting SCA in their estate plans and/or establishing life income or other planned gifts. The Society honors SCA's founder, Liz Putnam and her vision in creating SCA.

To learn how you can make your own legacy gift to SCA, please call 888.722.9675 ext. 2024 or send an email to: giftplanning@thesca.org.

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Winning New Honors.

"When it comes to getting kids outdoors, no one has done more over the past sixty years than Liz Putnam," stated Jamie Williams, president of The Wilderness Society. "Liz's dedication shines as a brilliant example of how to foster our next generation of conservation leaders. She is an inspiration to all of us."

With that, he presented SCA's founding president with the Society's Robert Marshall Award before a VIP-studded audience in Washington, DC. As United States senators, federal agency officials and prominent philanthropists filled the hall with thunderous applause, a powerful storm rumbled outside. It was as if nature wanted to join the ovation.

The Marshall Award is The Wilderness Society's highest citizen's honor. "I am humbled and deeply grateful for this award," Liz said, "and I accept it on behalf of the SCA staff, board, supporters and, most of all, on behalf of SCA members and alumni, and all the young people who volunteer to make our world and our wilderness a safer and better place."

Following the ceremony, many in the crowd, including numerous Wilderness Society staff members, swarmed Liz to congratulate her and share how they had started their careers by volunteering with SCA. From her joyful expression, it was clear that those heartfelt words meant as much to Liz as the award she held in her hands.

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Crozet, VA

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FINANCIAL REPORT & SUMMARY

Statement of Operations

Year ended March 31, 2016

OPERATING REVENUE AND OTHER SUPPORT	
Program revenue	$ 29,644,787
Contributions and private grants	5,914,187
Net assets released from restriction	2,745,520
Other income	146,542
Total Operating Revenues and Other Support	**$ 38,451,036**

OPERATING EXPENSES	
Field expenses	$ 22,535,969
Program support and development	8,650,938
Participant recruitment	892,457
General and administrative	2,687,571
Fundraising	2,900,117
Total Operating Expenses	**$ 37,667,051**
Surplus from operations	$ 783,985

Statement of Financial Position

Year ended March 31, 2016

Total Assets	**$ 22,767,316**
Total Liabilities	$ 11,373,893

CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted - from operations	$ 783,985
Unrestricted - from non-operating activities	498,150
Temporarily restricted	(1,219,551)
Permanently restricted	57,473
Total change in net assets	120,057
Net assets, beginning of year	11,273,366
Net assets, end of year	$ 11,393,423

ENDOWMENT VALUE	
Board Designated Funds	$ 3,279,374
Donor Restricted Funds	$ 4,588,482
Total Endowment Funds	**$ 7,867,856**

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