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Anchorage youth get down to work



by Cara Christiansen
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ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- Down south, the coveted summer job for teens is working as a lifeguard. In Anchorage, though, teens fought for the chance to clean up the parks and trails where their friends have been out riding and playing.

Twenty local youth have been working hard all summer as part of the Youth Employment in Parks program. (Kyle Stalder/KTUU-TV)

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Anchorage Parks and Recreation Marketing Director Beth Nordlund said the applicant response was overwhelming. (Kyle Stalder/KTUU-TV)

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"We had 80 applications for our 20 positions. So, it was really a popular program to get started. And this is our first year," Nordlund said.

Anchorage Parks and Recreation has partnered with Alaska Youth for Environmental Action to launch the program. Community members helped recruit teens for this first year of operations.



Themes have included trees, unpaved trails and global warming. (Kyle Stalder/KTUU-TV)

Program participant Megan Webb said she learned of it through her school.

"I went to my career resource center at school and they offered me the opportunity to apply for YEP," Webb said.

For those that made it into the program, it is an experience unlikely to be replicated elsewhere.

Another participant, Carter Marvin, said the job keeps the group busy all week.



Participant Carter Marvin said the job keeps the group busy all week. (Kyle Stalder/KTUU-TV)

"On Monday, we get educated on kind of what we're doing for the week. And then Tuesday through Thursdays are work days, like now. And then on Fridays, we have recreational days where we just do something fun with the crew," Marvin said.

Professionals in the natural resources field have given their time to teach and work with the group.

"We've been working with an educational theme every week to give them a flavor for what they're about to do in the parks and on the trails," Nordlund said.

Themes have included trees, unpaved trails and global warming.

"It was a lot of hard work but it was also really cool to see all our



Participant Megan Webb said it's been a lot of hard work but gratifying to see the end result. (Kyle Stalder/KTUU-TV)

labor done. So, it was a really amazing experience," Webb said.

The program wraps up this month, but not before the youth have a chance to re-visit an area they enjoyed during the summer.

"Next week we're having a mentorship week where we follow around someone we've met through the work thing, the work program," Marvin said.

All involved are pleased with this year's program. Nordlund said there's great value to it.

"They're having first job experiences and they're getting exposed to all kinds of experts in the different natural resource fields," Nordlund said.

It looks like there's a chance some of the same faces will be showing up for one of the coveted spots.

"It's a really diverse group of kids. So, we all came together. No one really knew anybody. And then we just, we built on that. And we're really close right now. It's really fun," Webb said.

Next year, Parks and Recreation will expand the program, giving even more young people a chance to get in on a fun learning experience.

This summer, the program was run with municipal funds. A donation from the Rasmuson Foundation will contribute to the program's expansion next summer.

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