

Youth Employment in Parks



Anchorage Park Foundation

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What is YEP?

The Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) program is a program of the Anchorage Parks & Recreation Department and the Anchorage Park Foundation.



The goal of the YEP program is to positively engage a new generation of diverse youth leaders with the environment and the Anchorage community through meaningful training, employment, and outdoor recreation.

Each summer YEP hires teens to provide recreation programming and complete park improvement projects in Anchorage parks. Beginning in 2007, the YEP program has expanded its scope and impact each season, while developing more partnerships in the community each year.



Crews participate in civic engagement training, studying local government, attending community council and assembly meetings, job shadowing and career planning activities.

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Funding

With major funding each year from the Municipality of Anchorage, the Anchorage Park Foundation, the Rasmuson Foundation, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, YEP hires teens and gathers community support to implement program goals.

YEP Themes

Each week of YEP work is focused on education and project work based on one of the following themes:

- **WATERWAYS**
- **TRAILS**
- **FORESTS**
- **NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

Program Goals:

- 1) Create a meaningful “first job” experience and career pathway for diverse youth to work in the outdoors and natural resources fields.
- 2) Expose youth to the outdoors and connect them with nature to support healthy lifestyles.
- 3) Provide youth with community action skills and character development so that they may become effective citizens.
- 4) Build community through enhanced recreation opportunities, parks and public spaces.



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Recreation Crews

Rec crews build stronger communities and promote healthy activity by providing free or low-cost recreation programming in park sites throughout the community, serving hundreds of Anchorage families. Known as the "Park & Play" program, YEP rec crews encourage Anchorage kids to get outdoors, get active and get to know their environment and public lands.



Parks Crews

Parks crews take better care of parks and promote stewardship of natural resources by restoring stream banks, building and repairing trails, completing forestry projects, restoring landscapes and more, all while learning about their neighborhoods, their environment and their community. Parks crews beautify and improve parks, restore habitats and healthy forests and improve community access to natural areas by building and repairing trails.



Civic Education

Teens participate in civic engagement training intended to empower them to become informed, active and engaged community leaders. Civic education sessions include:

- Making a presentation at an Anchorage Assembly Meeting
- Learn about the community council & Assembly process
- Learning about social capital & how to advocate about issues they care about



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Evaluation & Outcomes

Each year, YEP partners engage participating youth in pre-participation and post-participation self-evaluation, targeted at assisting program managers in improving the program each year. Crew members are asked to rate themselves in the following classifications before and after the season:

- Use of Resources
- Interpersonal skills
- Understanding relationships
- Ability to work with a variety of technologies
- Basic job skill knowledge
- Critical thinking skills
- Personal qualities

After the season, teens reported statistically significant increases in a variety of self-evaluation areas. Specifically, teens reported an 8% increase in understanding relationships and peer-peer interactions; a 14.3% increase in ability to use technology and tools; a 6.4% increase in their assessment of their personal qualities; and a 8.2% increase in critical thinking skills. These results indicate that YEP crews increased their ability to apply environmental education to their everyday lives, solve problems and work towards goals.

YEP Wins Prestigious National Award from Department of Interior

On Monday, August 2, 2010, the Department of the Interior announced that YEP is a 2010 Partners in Conservation Award winner. This award honors programs and organizations working with DOI agencies to accomplish significant conservation projects. YEP crews and partners celebrated this award at a ceremony at Margaret Eagan Sullivan Park, with the rain-garden YEP crews completed in July in the background. Our partners at the Fish & Wildlife Service nominated YEP for the award in recognition for the teens' accomplishments in restoring habitat, protecting waterways and removing invasive weeds.



Job Skills for Successful Futures

YEP crews learn “green” job skills and put those skills to work on projects benefiting the Anchorage community. Their education & skills development opportunities include:

- Crews are introduced to basic on-the-job conduct and expectations, essential for teens to succeed in future jobs
- Introduction to the theory and philosophy of the parks & recreation profession; the Anchorage Parks & Recreation Department's history and impact on community
- Introduction to the science and theory behind the basic environmental themes of YEP: **waterways, trails & forests**
- Safety training, including how to use tools needed for projects and basic CPR & first aid
- Recreation crews participated in a series of training sessions on managing groups of children, mediating conflict, and how to plan fun and educational activities to stimulate children's imaginations and connect them to the outdoors in their **neighborhoods**
- Introduction to the safe and proper use of hand tools like Mcleod rakes, Pulaskis and chainsaws necessary for **forestry** and **trailbuilding**





Career Development & Leadership Skills

Once they've learned great job skills, teens learn how to connect those skills to a productive future.

Throughout the summer, teens participate in career & leadership development programming, enabling them to become community leaders with healthy futures, including:

- Drug awareness training in partnership with the Anchorage Police Department
- Financial literacy and credit education training in partnership with Wells Fargo
- Team building and leadership development exercises in partnership with Chugach Adventure Guides and the Alaska National Guard
- Introduction to healthy outdoor recreation activities in trails and parks
- Community service opportunities in park improvement projects throughout the community
- Public speaking skills workshops

"I think the content of the program is most important – projects, recreation activities, volunteer days and education."

– Conservation Crew Member

At the end of the summer program, teens participate in **Mentorship Week**, focused on connecting teens to successful futures through:

- Panels of professionals from growing career fields
- A resume writing workshop led by the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Job shadowing opportunities with careers ranging from law enforcement to wildlife biology
- Mock interviews and public speaking practice sessions



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YEP CREWS AT WORK: Taking Better Care of What We Have

YEP crews accomplished several trail projects in concert with this summer's **neighborhood park fix-it** campaign, engaging the Anchorage community in rehabilitating neighborhood parks. Parks Crews learned trail building techniques while improving connectivity and community access to recreation opportunities in popular neighborhood parks.

- In Williwaw Park in Russian Jack neighborhood, crews built a soft-surface **trail** loop connecting two areas of the park. This new trail offers community members a safe, pleasant route connecting neighbors and neighborhoods.
- Parks Crews **rebuilt a soft-surface trail** at Cheney Lake Park, a popular park for fishing, walking, running and boating in Northeast Anchorage. They removed 45 tons of irregularly sized pea-gravel and replaced it with 45 tons of D-1 gravel, resulting in a **safer trail**.
- In Far North Bicentennial Park, Parks Crews re-routed and "de-rooted" an eroding and unsafe segment of the Moose Ridge Link Trail. Crews removed large roots from 1.5 miles of existing trail, constructed 320 feet of **new trail** and hauled in lumber to make a 40' boardwalk. Community members and trail users are already enjoying this **new, safe trail recreation opportunity**.
- Parks Crews completed **brush clearing and erosion control on the singletrack trails** in Far North Bicentennial Park in partnership with Singletrack Advocates. These unique trails offer elite mountain biking, skiing and hiking opportunities for Anchorage athletes.



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- In partnership with Anchorage seniors, Parks Crews created a new, wheelchair-accessible trail connecting the Anchorage Senior Center to the Chester Creek Greenbelt Trail. Crews and volunteers laid 200 tons of gravel by hand in order to enable seniors to access Anchorage's 250 miles of greenbelt trails.

YEP CREWS AT WORK: Stewarding Natural Resources

Parks Crews perform essential habitat maintenance and restoration, improving fish passage, water quality and forest health. The skills they learn while caring for Anchorage's environment enable them to become strong stewards of Alaska's public lands.

- Crews completed **stream-bank restoration** work at University Lake under the direction of the Fish & Wildlife Service and streambank restoration experts from Moore Landscaping in Kenai. Crewmembers planted a total of 6,000 dormant willow swatches, dug and placed over 600 square feet of veg-mat, and completed bank restoration at 3 different locations totalling 220 feet of restored stream and bank. This erosion control effort will **improve water quality and enhance salmon habitat in the Chester Creek watershed.**
- Crews created a **rain garden and bird habitat** at Westchester Lagoon. Crews moved 60 yards of topsoil, planted almost 2000 separate plants including fully mature birch trees weighing over 800 pounds and standing over 20 feet tall. In addition to the trees, crews planted native iris, high bush cranberry, columbine, geranium and beautiful day lilies.
- Crews completed an **invasive Reed Canary grass pull** around Westchester Lagoon. This weed pull will protect native species and ensure healthy habitat for native birds.
- Parks crews completed invasive spruce bark beetle eradication work in Far North Bicentennial Park. Crews felled and chipped infested trees in order to reduce beetle habitat and slow the spread of the infestation. Teens learn marketable **forestry job skills** while reducing the danger of wildfire and erosion and **preserving intact riparian habitat in the Campbell Creek Watershed.**



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YEP CREWS AT WORK: Building a Stronger, Healthier Community

Recreation Crews offer **free, healthy and fun park and play programming in underserved areas** throughout the summer. By engaging children in healthy outdoor play opportunities, crews ensure that kids have a safe space, connection to fun activities and learn about their public lands.

Throughout the summer, Recreation Crews offered Park & Play programming at St. Anthony's Church in the Russian Jack neighborhood and at Davis Park in Mountain View. Crews offered arts & crafts, sports, environmental education and field trip opportunities, and kept the activities going during rainy spells with board games, painting activities and excellent attitudes.

Art in the Parks

Recreation Crews teamed up with local artists Stephen Blanchett, Amy Hettinger and Jen Jolliff to provide arts programs for **neighborhood** children at Mountain View Lions Park.

- Stephen Blanchett is a member of the performance group Pamyua. He partnered with YEP crews to introduce children to the tradition of **Yup'ik song and dance**, including the use of drums.
- Guest artist Amy Hettinger joined the Recreation Crew at Davis Park to engage children in song and music. This activity encouraged participants to think creatively, develop their musical talents and **draw inspiration from their environment**.
- Jen Jolliff led kids in an exciting series of sand sculpture workshops. With YEP crews, Jen taught children a variety of simple and effective carving techniques. This activity encouraged children to **experiment, explore and imagine within the natural environment**.



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Climate Change Summer Science Camp

With curriculum development and program leadership partnership from Alaska Geographic, Recreation Crews offered a pilot climate change summer science camp program at Fairview Recreation Center. Alongside education professionals from Alaska Geographic, YEP crews led middle school children in experiential learning, scientific experimentation and exploration of public lands.

Community Events

Recreation and Parks Crews provided engaging recreation activities for a variety of city-wide events throughout the summer, including the annual Cardboard Boat Regatta, the Skyhounz Frisbee Tournament, Fairview Back to School Carnival and Mountain View National Night Out.

At the beginning of the season, in partnership with Chugach National Forest and Alaska Geographic, the Youth Employment in Parks crews staffed a special event with internationally known artist Wyland. **"Art Starts in the Parks and Flows to the Forest"** was the inaugural community celebration of National Get Outdoors Day. Crews led kids and families in painting murals of forests, oceans and parks for installation in Mountain View and around Anchorage.



"Working with kids was awesome. It was rewarding, tough, stressful and the best thing I've done so far in my life. I went home everyday feeling like I made a true difference. The coolest part was that it was in Mountain View – MY community!"

– Recreation Crew Member

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YEP Reflects A Diverse Community

High Schools Represented

AVAIL
 Bartlett High School
 Chugiak High School
 Dimond High School
 Eagle River High School
 East High School
 Family Partnership
 Frontier Charter School
 Highland Tech
 SAVE
 Service High School
 South High School
 Steller School
 West High School
 Grace Christian Academy
 Home School
 University of Alaska Anchorage
 Benny Bensen Secondary School

Languages Spoken

Spanish: 10
 Russian: 1
 German: 2
 Samoan: 1
 Mien: 1
 French: 1
 Japanese: 2
 Thai: 1
 Laotian: 1

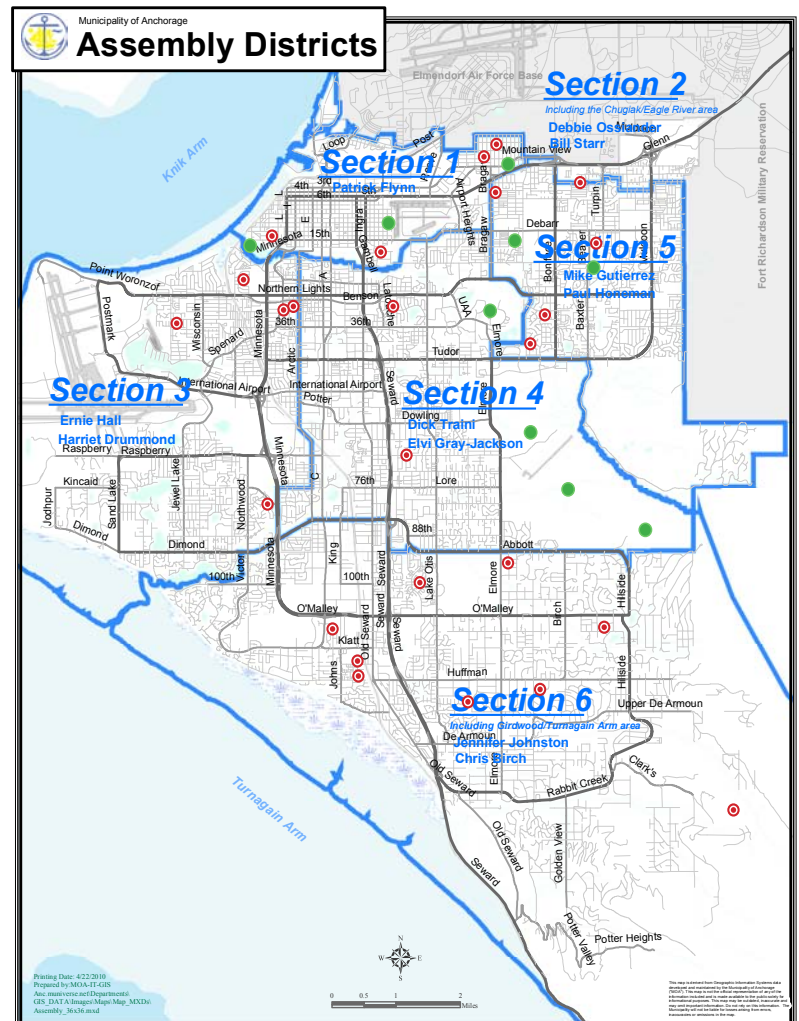
Ethnic Origins

61% Caucasian
 18% African American
 14% Asian or Pacific Islander
 7% Alaska Native
 7% Multiracial
 4% Hispanic

Age Distribution

16 years old: 7 youths
 17 years old: 13 youths
 18 years old: 6 youths
 19 years old: 2 youths

In 2010, YEP is a first job for 14 of the participants!



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2007–2010 Funders & Partners

Program Funders

- BP
- ConocoPhillips
- Rasmuson Foundation
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Single Track Advocates
- U.S. Forest Service State & Private Forestry
- Anchorage Municipal Assembly
- Great Land Trust
- Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Alaska State Legislature
- Anchorage Community Land Trust
- Wells Fargo
- REI
- Alaska State Council on the Arts

Program Partners

Alaska Center for the Environment
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Alaska Community Development Corporation
Alaska Conservation Alliance
Alaska Conservation Foundation
Alaska Conservation Solutions
Alaska Democratic Party
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game
Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources
Alaska F.I.E.L.D. School
Alaska Geographic
Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
Alaska Native History Association
Alaska Pacific University
Alaska Process Industry Careers
Alaska Railroad
Alaska Rose Society

Alaska State Parks
Alaska Teen Media Institute
Alaska Trails
Alaska Youth for Environmental Action
Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling
Alaskans for Responsible Mining
AmeriCorps
Anchorage Botanical Garden
Anchorage Construction Academy
Anchorage Disc Golfing Association
Anchorage Faith & Action
Congregations Together
Anchorage Fire Department
Anchorage Recycling Facility
Anchorage Regional Compost Facility
Anchorage Regional Landfill
Anchorage School District
Anchorage Urban League of Young Professionals
Anchorage Waterways Council
Bill Stokes
Bob Robertson
British Universities North America Club
Bureau of Land Management
Campfire
Channel 2 News, KTUU
Chris Aquino
Chris Frenier
Chugach Adventure Guides
Congregation Beth Shalom
Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Covenant House
Dar'Shon Tucker
Darrell Hess
Department of Labor
Anchorage Job Center
Earth Watch Institute
Girdwood Ski & Cyclery
Government Hill Community Council
Governor Bill Sheffield
Graphic Works
Great Harvest Bread Company
Green Star
Happy Trails
Holland America

Highway 2 Highway Project
Job Corps
John Gregoire
Johnson Controls
Jonathan Teeters
Kids' Kitchen
Kikkan Randall
KPB Architects
Land Design North
Ma'o Tosi
Moore's Landscaping
Moose's Tooth
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Alaska National Guard
National Park Service
National Wildlife Federation
Native Movement
Ninestar
Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage
Pablo's Bicycle Rental
Paddleboat Cafe
Pizza Olympia
Play It Again Sports
Princess Tours
ReStore
RurALCAP
Ryan Zinn
SAGA
Sourdough Mining Company
St. Anthony's Church
Stellar Designs
Teamsters
Total Reclaim Inc.
Trail Watch
TREErific
UAF Cooperative Extension
U.S. Postal Service
United Way
University of Alaska
Van Waggoner
Vasati Ieremia
Vernon Wilson
Wyland Foundation
Youth Conservation Corps

Don't take our word for it.

Listen to what YEP crews have to say.

"The best thing about YEP was knowing our work made a difference in the community and that it was recognized by lots of people."



"The biggest reward of YEP is learning and understanding the importance of hard work because before this job I felt like nothing I did had a true impact. I wasn't lazy, but now I'm MOTIVATED."

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www.AnchorageParkFoundation.org