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Delivering Maximum Impact

To increase our impact on America’s public lands and young people, SCA has recently launched several new program models. These include hosting one-day ConSERVE volunteer projects in cities nationwide, deploying special intern “ambassadors” in national parks, and initiating creative partnerships with other youth-serving organizations such as Girl Scouts of the USA.

This year, SCA engaged over 10,000 volunteers for the first time in our history. More important, those dedicated stewards rendered 1.5 million hours of much needed service: protecting more than 100,000 acres of wildlife habitat, maintaining over 3,000 miles of hiking trails, and enhancing the experience of millions of individuals who visited our most treasured natural and cultural sanctuaries.

SCA’s impact is not limited to the land, however. Our unique approach to hands-on outdoor service has a powerful effect on youth development and strengthens life skills that foster optimal advancement and continuous growth. New surveys show that among our 2017 participants, 83% report a heightened sense of responsibility for protecting our environment; 82% plan to spend more time in nature, and 79% are more likely to volunteer again.

SCA is now gearing up to build upon these outcomes in 2018 and beyond. We are refining our program frameworks to deliver more effective and consistent field experiences, integrating STEM and citizen science curricula into our high school crew programs, and developing plans to scale up our community crews to provide a broader array of job and leadership development opportunities for urban teenagers and young adults.

The magic of SCA is that our volunteers’ on-the-ground achievements are only the beginning. Bolstered with new skills and confidence, and guided by the conservation values honed during their service, SCA alumni—the next generation of American leaders—do and will continue to positively influence their communities, businesses, and governments for years and years to come.

Your support of SCA’s mission is vital. It is also greatly appreciated. I invite you to increase your own impact through a generous, year-end gift that will help SCA conserve lands and transform lives.

Thank you, and best wishes for the holiday season and the New Year.

Jaime B. Matyas
President and CEO

Last year, over 10,000 SCA PARTICIPANTS spent 1.5 million hours in nature, protecting 100,000 ACRES of wildlife habitat and improving 3,000 MILES of trails...

...AS A RESULT:

79% are more likely to volunteer again.

82% plan to spend more time outdoors.

89% learned skills they can use in a future job.

83% feel more responsible for protecting nature.
Alumni Earn Salute

Four SCA alumni are among the North American Association for Environmental Education’s 30 Under 30 program, which recognizes “game-changers” under the age of 30 who are taking on leadership roles to make a difference for the planet.

Fadwa Bouhedda (SCA John Muir National Historic Site, 2016; National Park Service Pacific West Region, 2017), who is researching her master’s thesis on water quality and coastal vulnerability at the University of San Francisco.

Danielle Diuguid (SCA Bay Area, 2012-2014), currently the senior knowledge and learning manager at Education Outside, a San Francisco-based nonprofit advancing science education and environmental literacy by teaching outdoors in public schools.

Roland Richardson (SCA Massachusetts AmeriCorps, 2008), a development officer for conservation initiatives with the National Recreation and Park Association.

Leandra Taylor (SCA Sonora Desert Network, 2014-2015), presently a coordinator with the Merge Alliance, a community coalition in Albuquerque, engaging multicultural groups to ensure equitable access to New Mexico’s natural resources.

Forest Service Honors SCA

The U.S. Forest Service recently presented SCA with two Regional Foresters Awards. The Fire Mentor Program, a joint initiative of SCA, The Nature Conservancy, Job Corps and the Forest Service, earned the Diversity and Inclusiveness Award for engaging underserved Gulf Coast youth in wildland firefighting career training. Our 2017 pilot program in Osceola National Forest is projected to expand next year to five states from South Carolina to Texas.

SCA’s Idaho AmeriCorps Program took the Volunteerism and Service Award for “consistently meeting and exceeding expectations for engaging youth and volunteers” in outdoor leadership experience and multidisciplinary career training. SCA has collaborated with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes at Salmon-Challis National Forest for the past eight years, and AmeriCorps recently extended the program through 2020.

Dressed for Success

If you missed National Dog Day, fear not. SCA interns Jessica Millman and EJ Verble had you covered—as well as Drachma, who appears to have thoroughly enjoyed rocking her SCA tee shirt at Denali National Park. Photo by kennels ranger and former SCA sled dog kennel intern Ashley Guevara.
LIKE MANY YOUNG WOMEN, I HAVE HAD BIG DREAMS AND I FEEL FORTUNATE TO HAVE FULFILLED MANY OF THEM AS A RESULT OF MY EXPERIENCE WITH SCA.

In the summer of 2001, I hoisted my brother’s backpack onto my 11-year-old frame and almost toppled over from the weight. David was 16 and heading to Idaho for his backcountry SCA trail crew. That’s when I began to dream of spending my summer in the rugged wilderness, getting caked in dirt, earning trail names, and eating Spam.

It was that same year that I saw my first episode of the CBS reality show, *The Amazing Race*. The adventurer inside me was hungry to experience big challenges.

In 2005, my SCA dream came true (save the Spam). I spent the summer in George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Roanoke, Virginia, working with a crew of six fellow teens and two leaders, hiking up tiresome switchbacks, swinging Pulaskis, rolling off the duff, and building a horse trail from scratch.

That school year, I volunteered with the local SCA program in Pittsburgh and the following summer, I was lucky enough to join a crew in the Kenai Fjords of Seward, Alaska! We repaired trails, camped behind an electric bear fence, and filled our coolers with glacier ice that we harvested from the river.

A WELCOMING CULTURE

On one of our recreation days, I was jumping up and down on the prow of our boat during a glacier cruise, giggling wildly as I timed my jump perfectly to feel a little lift in my stomach. My crew leader said supportively, “You are one of the weirdest people I’ve ever met.” To me this was a grand compliment. I had found a culture where it was not only socially acceptable to be my spontaneous and expressive self—it was encouraged.

On my SCA crews, we worked together solving social challenges and gained confidence in our competency for physical work, our ability to camp for a whole month, making fun out of nothing, and developing meaningful friendships. The feeling of this tightly knit group was unlike high school where the nonacademic focus was on superficial components of self and social hierarchy.

Whenever I returned home from my SCA crews, nostalgia would set in and I’d subconsciously re-establish the walls around myself. The experience of feeling comfortable expressing myself outdoors began to guide my life. I engaged in immersive wilderness experiences that sparked friendships...
In Norway, Becca and team mate Floyd Pierce learn they are about to skydive on The Amazing Race, a reality TV show in which contestants make adventurous treks around the world.

Moving forward, I see that anything is possible if I maintain this persistent one-step-at-a-time attitude, just like hiking a peak, and redefining “failures” as stepping-stones to success. I am pushing my limits as a rock climber, and it is my overarching goal to continue to spread positivity, to help people live more fun-filled lives, and to feel confident expressing their unique selves.

Positive ripples cannot be underrated. I thank SCA for granting me the opportunity to experience the wonder of the outdoors, where greatness is bound to happen, where I connect more fully with myself and others, and where I live my wildest dreams.

that ultimately got me involved in rock climbing and led me to Israel to live in a yurt for five months learning permaculture and sustainable agriculture.

After two gap years (post sophomore year), I found the perfect outlet to finish my education, Warren Wilson College, where I earned a degree in Outdoor Leadership. I lived my dream of being the crew leader/mentor that I had looked up to in my SCA days and led a group of teenagers in Yosemite National Park! My students, co-leaders, and I all gained confidence and grew alongside each other, and these outdoor experiences built leadership and technical kinesthetic skills within me, which were monumental when it came time to race around the world in competition for a million dollars.

"A TRUER SENSE OF WINNING"

Four years after submitting my first application to The Amazing Race and 15 years after the conception of the dream, I received a phone call from the program’s casting director. He had remembered me from my first application video. It was memorable because I was proudly my unique, authentic self. I embraced wilderness experiences and “alternative” lifestyles instead of trying to fit into the status quo culture.

The skills I gained from SCA prepared me to achieve my dreams, including this adrenaline-inducing competition. While I didn’t walk away with the grand prize, I experienced the truer sense of winning. As part of “Team Fun,” I was myself for millions of viewers to see, acting with dignity, confidence, and a can-do attitude through adversity, inspiring viewers to look at life through a more positive lens.

There is no saying for sure what my future holds, but for now, I am building curriculum for unique corporate team building experiences, and creating presentations to show people that, by embracing discomfort, uncertainty, and failure, we give ourselves the opportunity to learn and grow in valuable ways and, ultimately, feel more alive than ever.

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Becca (center) with SCA crew in Virginia, 2006
LIFE IS FINITE, BUT LEGACIES CAN LAST FOREVER.

Richard Guadagno’s life ended tragically yet heroically on September 11, 2001, when he and other passengers overcame hijackers and forced their plane down in a southwest Pennsylvania field before the terrorists could reach their intended target.

To keep Rich’s memory alive, his father, Jerry Guadagno, and sister, Lori, fund two SCA interns each year through the Richard J. Guadagno SCA Conservation Fellowship. One Fellow serves at the Flight 93 National Memorial in western PA, the second at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge in northern California, where Rich was refuge manager.

“More than ever before,” says Lori Guadagno, “we are feeling the urgency to inspire and cultivate conservation leadership for the future. The most effective way my family can accomplish that and honor Rich’s legacy is by continuing our support for the Richard J. Guadagno SCA Conservation Fellowship.”

At the Flight 93 Memorial, Guadagno Fellow Kelly Kitka of Fort Worth, TX helped tell the story of that fateful day. Her photographs have been featured on numerous TV broadcasts and her presentations moved countless visitors. “I end my ranger programs with ‘Flecti non frangi.’ In English, it means ‘to be bent, not broken.’ Even amid the attacks, our flag was still waving.”

Katelyn Southall is a Bay Area native and 2015 graduate of Humboldt State University where she majored in wildlife biology. At Humboldt Bay Refuge, (among other duties) she taught young children about waterfowl and marine habitats.

Consider including a bequest to SCA in your estate plans.

To learn more about how easy it is to include a provision for SCA in your will or living trust, or to get sample language for your attorney, please contact Wilke Nelson, SCA’s Director of Gift Planning at 703-842-4210 or Wnelson@thesca.org.

Learn more about planned giving to benefit SCA at thesca.org/PlannedGiving.

“We are tremendously pleased to know of all the positive outcomes from past Fellows, and now are excited to provide more opportunities for future recipients,” Lori states. “We believe this is the most meaningful way we can open doors for future environmentalists needing valuable exposure and experience in the national park and national wildlife refuge systems.

“We are so grateful for our partnership with SCA, which provides the guidance and vision to achieve our mission.”
A Young Steward Hits the Big Screen

Since the local premiere of the documentary “National Park Diaries,” friends of Nic Gutowski have given him a new name: “Hollywood.”

Nic, a high school senior in Nome, Alaska and SCA volunteer, is prominently featured in the film. The documentary chronicles the hard-earned achievements and personal discoveries of SCA crew members in Denali National Park and Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. Nic served on the Denali crew, rerouting a trail across the fragile tundra.

“It makes me feel proud to see something I did become that big,” Nic declared. “And everyone said they liked the movie, which makes me more proud.”

In October, SCA and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve, which is headquartered in Nome, co-hosted film screenings for Nic’s neighbors and classmates. “It was wonderful to see one of our own students featured in the documentary,” says Bering Land Bridge Superintendent Jeanette Koelsch. “Nic and I are both Alaskan Native, and we both have inside of us a deep connection to the land through subsistence and our culture.”

“Having Nic participate in a film about public lands gives local teens a seat at the table on conservation and land management issues,” added Guadalupe Zaragoza, a Preserve informational specialist. “Seeing a Nome teenager participate in something bigger than himself is very powerful to watch.”

Each showing was followed by a Q&A to spotlight the benefits of connecting youth to volunteer opportunities on public lands. Several audience members remarked on Nic’s leadership role, which clearly grew on-screen as the project progressed. Eventually, one viewer asked about a scene in which the Denali crew confronts some bear scat. To gauge its freshness, Nic scooped it up with his bare hands, which shocked many of his crew mates.

“How fresh was the bear poo?” came the question. “Real fresh!” Nic responded with a smile.

SCA produced the film with Reel Works Teen Filmmaking, in partnership with American Express.

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Use the attached envelope, or give securely online at thesca.org/MatchTGW
Post-Hurricane, Houston Teen Shows Resolve

IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE HARVEY AND ITS DEVASTATING IMPACT ON THE CITY OF HOUSTON, THE GREENWAY SPOKE WITH INGRID PIÑA, A 17-YEAR-OLD SCA VOLUNTEER, JUST AFTER HER LOCAL CREW BEGAN TO ASSIST WITH THE CLEAN-UP.

What did you see out there?

That first day, we surveyed our work site, Houston’s White Oak Bayou Greenway, and saw trash dangling in trees fifteen feet in the air, bent road signs entangled in branches, and random items—from tires to playhouses—strewed across whatever had not been trampled by Harvey’s floodwaters.

Your crew works periodic weekends during the school year?

Yes. We are a crew of students from all over Houston, and if any of us had not seen the value of working around the school year, we definitely saw it then—we felt it. Our community needs us serving, restoring natural places at every moment of time.

Did Harvey magnify that necessity for you?

Certainly, our circumstances in Houston are dramatic. However, the less dramatic signs are not less important, something huge that I’ve learned from SCA. True restoration along the bayou will involve removing invasive species and planting native trees if we want to make our ecosystem healthy and thriving again, and lessen the impact of natural disasters in the future.

Is it tough balancing school, SCA, and the rest of your life?

Sometimes, the night before a crew day, I sigh, exhausted from a busy school week, not ready to wake up early and plunge into the wetland mud. However, the feeling after a full crew day is incomparable. I never regret showing up. To bond with the land you live on, the people you live near, to truly become an active, positive member of your ecosystem, this is a special opportunity.

SEE MORE OF OUR INTERVIEW AT THESCA.ORG/INGRID