



Intern Grayson Huston (left) says the SCA-NPS Academy will help him “learn from professionals in the field.”

Parks Nearing 100 Need Young SCA Volunteers

The average age of a national park visitor is climbing through the 50s and the number of visitors under 15 is down by half, reports CNN. Fifty percent of national park leadership is scheduled to retire by 2016 while only 7% of the parks' current workforce is younger than 30. Plus, just one-in-five park patrons is a person of color.

Our national parks need a game-changer—and they're banking on SCA.

Five years ago, SCA and Grand Teton National Park started NPS Academy to expose under-represented college students to national park career opportunities and to build a younger, more inclusive park workforce. The program, funded in part

by forward-looking SCA donors, has added new park partners and expanded student enrollment every year since, and the Park Service has just made NPS Academy its primary diversity strategy going into its 2016 centennial.

“SCA is playing a critical role in helping us provide young people with a professional pathway,” says National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis, “and this important program typifies the innovative, collaborative spirit of the NPS-SCA partnership.”

In March, students from around the country gathered at one of four national parks to learn about the array of professional possibilities within the Park Service. “It was the best Spring Break I’ve ever had!” exclaimed State University of New York senior

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CONSERVATION BEGINS HERE.

Student Conservation Association
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Moving Conservation Forward

As we count down to the 2016 centennial of "America's Best Idea," SCA is launching some bold ideas of our own for a second century of national parks and, in a larger sense, for a new era in conservation.

The National Park Service has just named our joint SCA-NPS Academy, a workforce development and diversity program, one of its top priorities (see Page 1) and a similar initiative with the US Fish and Wildlife Service is also about to make summer placements across the country.

In another new development, 70 special Centennial Volunteer Ambassadors will help the National Park Service reach out to under-served audiences before the parks' 100th anniversary. A large portion of this program is focused on historic and cultural sites in leading cities to engage more diverse constituencies.

SCA's pioneering community conservation programs are well-positioned as a training ground for the Centennial Ambassadors, and this summer promises nationwide advances in our city-based programs including an Urban Tree House environmental educational initiative for Chicago K-12 students and expanded ConSERVE volunteer projects in local parks, all of which enable SCA to connect many more youth with nature.

In national parks and beyond, our conservation partners report that 97% of the outcomes achieved by SCA volunteers would not have been accomplished otherwise, a testament to the importance of their service. And the best part is that as they continue to practice stewardship at work and at home, SCA alumni are still impacting the world around them.

With the national parks' centennial a year away and SCA's 60th anniversary in 2017, we're working on even more "best ideas" to shape the future of conservation. Thank you for your continued support.

Jaime B. Malys

Parks Nearing 100 *continued from page 1*

Kunal Datta. "I'm going back to the Tetons this summer as an interpretive intern, teaching people and leading hikes. It's all I can think about!" Two Academy alumni are already on the Teton staff.

Emilio Mateo, a University of Michigan environmental studies major, says although he visits national parks often, the demographic gap is hard to miss. "I've noticed very few younger visitors," he nods. "That's become more of a driving force for me. Combining my interest in working with kids and my passion for environment at Rocky Mountain National Park this summer is a great opportunity."

On his CNN program "Inside Man," host Morgan Spurlock traveled to Denali National Park and Preserve to showcase the work of SCA members and the impact of their experiences. SCA helps young people "better understand their role on this earth and how we are having an impact," said Emily Fonti of Staten Island.

Spurlock himself joined the SCA trail crew at Denali, an experience that left him exhausted and impressed. "It's heartening to see such hard-working and dedicated young people taking such ownership in the park," he concluded.

*Opportunities like SCA's NPS Academy are made possible by generous donors like you. Please support the **Million Dollar Challenge** today.*



"Working in wildlife management would be...a dream," says SCA's Rasheedah Abdul-Mateen (left), at Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

SCA Q&A:

Interior Secretary
SALLY JEWELL



Can you give us a preview of next year's national park centennial?

The centennial in 2016 gives us all an opportunity to elevate public lands to an audience that has been more disconnected from nature than ever before. You'll see a big focus on the kind of students that SCA is also trying to reach: kids that have grown up communities that are more urban and more diverse than what has typically been represented on public lands.

Why is that such a crucial constituency?

If you've never had exposure to public lands, you don't realize that they're there. But if you recognize that these places are good for our souls and our clean water and clean air, and give our children a sense of purpose and playfulness and an opportunity to be curious, then you'll support them for generations to come. In many ways, the future of public lands is at stake.

What role does SCA play in your strategy?

SCA is the biggest and the oldest conservation association that engages young people in environmental stewardship in the country, so in many ways SCA is the "granddaddy" and SCA's engagement is going to be really, really important.

Is SCA's program progression an asset in this regard?

SCA recognizes that engagement is a continuum. NPS Academy is an in-depth program that changes the lives of those young people who get to participate in it. Other programs that are more local like [SCA's Washington, DC community program] are really important as a feeder system. SCA gets that this is a marathon, not a sprint, and all levels of engagement are important.

And Liz Putnam started it all in national parks...

Liz is a pioneer and she's been recognized for her leadership not only for founding SCA but for recognizing the importance of engaging youth in environmental stewardship. I think we can consider Liz to be the mother of the student conservation movement. It's an idea whose time has come and will be with us, I hope, forever.

It's a *challenge* all right...

So many national parks... so many young SCA volunteers willing to serve... huge backlog of needed improvements... limited funds and limited time... putting this all together is a *real challenge!* But this year, YOU can help!

Give to the Million Dollar Challenge before May 31st, and your gift will be **DOUBLED!**

Million Dollar Challenge

Your contribution of...

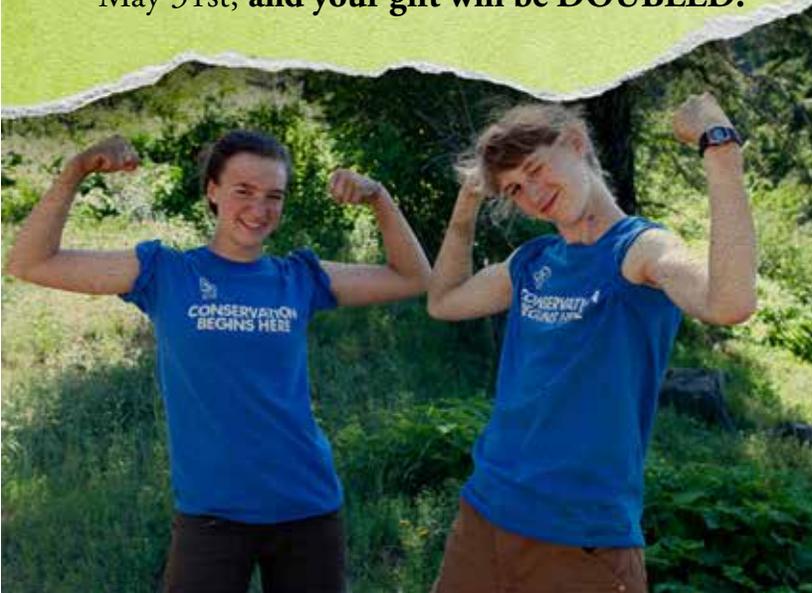
\$50 becomes **\$100**

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summer crew participants emerge with deeper connections to nature, improved leadership qualities, enhanced interpersonal skills, a greater sense of social responsibility, and a stronger ability to thrive.

Alumni of SCA's crew programs also exhibit a marked increase in sustainable behaviors and heightened interest in green careers. Separate surveys indicate 70% of SCA alumni are working or studying in an environmental field.

Previously, an independent study by Dr. Stephen Kellert of Yale University determined that outdoor programs offered by SCA “can have considerable impact on participants, particularly a wide range of physical, intellectual, emotional, and even moral and spiritual benefits...including enhanced awe and wonder of nature, and a stronger appreciation and commitment to conserve the natural environment.”

Dr. Kellert, who in addition to SCA examined the National Outdoor Leadership School and Outward Bound, also found participants reaped increased self-confidence and self-esteem, improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and enhanced creativity and focus, in addition to other benefits.

SCA is presently building on all these findings to leverage program strengths and implement changes that deepen and broaden our impact on youth.

SCA Impact on Youth Development is Substantial, Study Says

New research indicates that even a single SCA experience has a profound developmental impact on members of our National and Community Crew programs.

Studies conducted by Search Institute, an international authority on what youth need to succeed, show that SCA

Sustainability Goes Mainstream on Main Street

A mob is gathering in suburban Pittsburgh and Sahar Arbab couldn't be happier. In fact, she incited it.

For the past several weeks, Sahar—an SCA Green Cities sustainability intern—has been surveying small business owners door-to-door. Have you switched to LED lighting? Have you insulated your pipes and ducts? Do you compost? The questions call attention to the economic and ecologic benefits of such practices and provide baseline data for project organizers eager to help businesses up their game in the sport of sustainability.

Today, however, Sahar is spurring area residents to come downtown and buy stuff. It's what she calls a Cash Mob. “We're increasing exposure and rewards,” she notes. “In Carnegie, for example, eighty percent of participating businesses doubled their sales. These are walkable Main Streets, where owners live nearby and can interact with locals, and where one step can affect an entire community.”

SCA's Green Cities initiative started in Pittsburgh in 2008. The current team includes Sahar and nearly 20 other members: a

carbon emissions specialist with the Higher Education Climate Consortium, a storm water manager with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority, a recycling coordinator with the Penn. Resources Council, among others. Through research, analysis and education, these students are turning a region forgotten by the industrial age into a 21st century leader in sustainability.

Sustainable Pittsburgh Program Director Matt Mehalik points to the Green Workplace Challenge, much of which SCA interns built, executed and verified. “In its third year,” he states, “the program has generated eight million dollars in energy savings, and saved two tons of airborne particulates and enough water to fill Heinz Field.

“The interns are very creative in shaping the programs and producing effective outcomes. Sustainable Pittsburgh just received the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence and we would not have earned it without the Green Cities interns.”

Back at the Cash Mob, Sahar says both retailers and shoppers are responding well. “People want to support the environment but don't always know how,” she notes. “Events like this help us get the conversation started.”

The talk—and the walk—is taking over Main Street.



SCA interns Sean Johnson-Bice and Laura Breza conduct field research.

Florida Interns Seek “Keys” to Coping with Climate Change

The Florida Keys are often seen as a paradise. But they are also a laboratory.

Over the past century, ocean waters here have risen nine inches and scientists predict they could climb another 24” by 2060. As most of the Keys’ land mass is a mere five feet above sea level or less, the islands present what SCA intern Sean Johnson-Bice calls “a case study for the effects of climate change on endemic species.”

Since last fall, Sean and fellow intern Lauren Breza have been performing a wide range of field research for the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuges. Recently, they set out to monitor silver rice rats, an endangered species found only in the Lower Keys. “We were using ten-year old maps to locate their habitats,” Lauren notes, “and when we got there the sites were under nearly two feet of water.”

“We were knee-deep,” Sean concurs. The interns discovered the rat population had moved to higher ground and, although a formal analysis is still to come, their numbers appear to be significantly down.

Creativity Rewarded

To the north, intern Chris Burgess is making bold progress with another endangered species, the Key Largo woodrat. “They’re kind of cute,” he notes. “They have big, Mickey Mouse ears.”

A keystone species, woodrats eat only nuts and fruits and are crucial to the spread of seeds that contribute to a healthy hardwood hammock. However, farming, development and

invasive Burmese pythons have knocked the population down to as few as 200.

Since 2013, Chris has been creating artificial woodrat home-steads at Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, first relying on culvert pipes and more recently using a power-washer to clear space beneath trees and boulders to create more natural settings. Agency reports credit the manmade nests with significantly bolstering the Key Largo woodrat population. “It’s really been rewarding,” Chris says. “You can see the impact you’re having. Things have stabilized in recent years.

In another example of intern innovation, as suspicions grow that some of the Keys’ ospreys may be a genetically-distinct species, Sean won state approval to monitor nests via GoPro cameras attached to helium balloons. “We couldn’t afford remote-controlled drones,” he shrugs. Should the birds turn out to be a sub-population, Sean’s research could spur more funding to protect them.

“The environment we’re working in faces almost every kind of environmental problem,” Lauren contends. “Habitat loss, invasive species, sea level rise. The amount of information we’re taking in is astronomical.”

Sean agrees. “As a field tech, usually someone else takes your data and works it. Here I have opportunity to do the second half of the equation: run GIS analyses, statistical models, synthesize data and write up reports. We’re contributing to an understanding that will help future generations cope with rising sea levels. That’s what drives us every day.”

DONORS BARBARA BAIRD AND CHUCK HAGGARD: Youth Focus Sets SCA Apart



Photograph: Barbara Baird

Award-winning wildlife photographer Barbara Baird says she became hooked on nature as a girl with the sudden flash of an eastern bluebird. Years later, she became hooked on SCA by a young intern at the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, a local land trust outside Chicago where Barbara sits on the board and her partner, Chuck Haggard, volunteers on prescribed burns, prairie restoration and trail projects.



“Preserving habitat and halting out-of-control development in special places is a priority,” Barbara states.

While she and Chuck support several conservation organizations, they feel SCA’s focus on youth sets it apart from other groups. An investment in SCA, Barbara says, “connects young people to conservation and, after all, who is going to carry on if our youth aren’t inspired to connect to conservation?”

As the Illinois couple visits nearby Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, or takes day trips to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and Big Bend National Park from their summer home in Corpus Christi, Texas, they often see first-hand the impact of their support and the difference that SCA volunteers are making on our public lands. And as Barbara peers into her camera, she sees a brighter picture for our parks and our youth ahead. We do too. Thank you, Barbara and Chuck.

By planning for your future, you can help secure theirs...

Learn about charitable options that enable you to make a legacy gift to SCA while possibly enjoying valuable tax, estate planning and financial benefits for yourself and your loved ones.

Visit SCA’s new and detailed charitable planning website at:
thesca.org/plannedgiving



SCA and US Forest Service Renew Partnership

SCA recently signed a five-year Master Participating Agreement with the US Forest Service. The national covenant extends SCA's decades-old partnership with the Forest Service and expedites the execution of crucial forest protection and restoration projects by SCA volunteers.

At a Washington, DC ceremony with USFS Chief Tom Tidwell, SCA President and CEO Jaime Berman Matyas stated "more than renewing an agreement, we are recommitting to equipping a new generation to know, love and care for our nation's forests."

The SCA-USFS alliance began nearly 50 years ago at Dixie National Forest in Utah. Since then, close to 10,000 SCA members have served in national forests across the country. Among our joint initiatives, SCA and USFS manage the Veterans Fire Corps, which provides recent-era military vets with career training in wildfire mitigation and forestry while easing their transition back to civilian life.



SCA's Jaime Matyas with US Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell.

EARTH DAY 2015

SCA Hosts 16 Projects Nationwide

Powered by the passion of more than 2,500 volunteers, SCA marked its largest Earth Day yet with 16 service projects and celebrations nationwide. Our two largest events were presented by Official SCA Sponsor American Express at New York City's famed Van Cortlandt Park (right) and Washington, DC's Rock Creek Park.

"With our focus on city environments," stated SCA President and CEO Jaime Berman Matyas, "SCA and American Express are strengthening the connections between urban populations and our natural world, while empowering young people from diverse backgrounds to take on leadership roles in their own communities."

"We know parks and public lands play an important role in attracting visitors and supporting vibrant communities," said Timothy J. McClimon, president, American Express Foundation. "We're thrilled to join forces with SCA to deploy volunteers to protect and revitalize some of America's treasured parks."

In all, SCA volunteers strengthened municipal lands in Detroit, Houston, Seattle and ten other leading cities with additional support from Exelon Foundation, Johnson Controls, Inc., Southwest Airlines, and United Water.





The American Institute of Philanthropy and Charity Navigator rank SCA among America's top conservation charities for fund-raising efficiency.

SCA is a nationwide conservation force of college and high school volunteers who protect and restore America's parks, forests, and other public lands. SCA's active, hands-on approach to conservation has helped to develop a new generation of conservation leaders, inspire lifelong stewardship, and save our planet.

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Her New Passion? Electrofishing

Marlisa Jemison had always found fishing boring. So what was she doing, net in hand, aboard a metal skiff on the Connecticut River?

Marlisa is an intern at the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, which spans much of central New England. Originally, she was assigned to restore islands still suffering the effects of Hurricane Sandy, but today her advanced skills and biology degree from Baylor have earned the Texas native a free boat ride.

Stationed at the bow in rubber gloves and boots, Marlisa is part of an electrofishing excursion. Her job is to scoop up stunned river herring and record their weight, length and other data. Herring are an important link in the Connecticut's food chain, and Marlisa's findings will help shape future river management policies.

As a refuge scientist prepares to launch his high-voltage shock, Marlisa's mind is spinning. "I've never caught a fish in my life," she states. "What was I thinking? What if I'm not fast enough? What if I get electrocuted?!"

But suddenly three herring appear at the water's surface and Marlisa's instincts take over. She gently nets and inspects the



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fish before releasing them. "I've got to grab first and think later," she says. In time, she hauls in some striped bass and clips their tail fins for a genetics study.

Marlisa's internship, funded jointly by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and SCA donors, is part of career development initiative for under-served youth and she believes her experience will

be helpful as she pursues a profession outdoors. "I'm thankful for the opportunity to participate in a wildlife management project, learn new conservation methods and finally count myself among the throngs of people who love fishing," she smiles. "Granted, I may never be an angler, but I do have a new angle on fishing."