



CECILIA PINEDA

Green City Force member Danzel Turner transplanting at a New York City Housing Authority garden

AmeriCorps Members Green Their City

As a young, unemployed father living in a low-income housing complex in New York City, Wesley Booker says he was going nowhere. Then he found Green City Force, a nonprofit organization that taught him job skills while he served with AmeriCorps.

Since 2010, Green City Force's AmeriCorps program has taught young adults from low-income neighborhoods environmental sector job skills. The corps members educate city residents on how to save energy and water. They also support Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts and operate an urban farm in one housing project. Many corps members train for and receive environmental certification (such as from the Building Performance Institute) to help them land jobs after completing the program.

"Green City Force helped me grow mentally, professionally and academically," Booker says. "GCF has helped me get certification and a strong resumé to start my career in the environmental sustainability sector." For more information, see greencityforce.org.

Young Citizen Scientists on the Prairie

Citizens for Conservation (CFC) is leaving no fourth grader behind as it engages them in its prairie conservation and restoration work.

Following grade-level science curriculum standards, CFC leads field trips to its prairie preserves for all fourth graders in Illinois' Barrington 220 school district. Students measure and record native plant sizes, and compare their measurements to previous classes' recordings, dating back to 2009. They also collect native seeds for prairie restoration work and take home information and a small packet of prairie seeds.

The effort involves around 180 parent and CFC volunteers to lead and chaperone the field trips for about 700 students. Volunteers visit every fourth grade classroom in the district to prepare students for the field trip by discussing prairie conservation. Adaptations are made to include students with limited mobility or learning disabilities, so that all students can participate.

While the fourth grade program is the most time-intensive, CFC also partners with other organizations to provide science and nature education for other grade levels throughout the year.

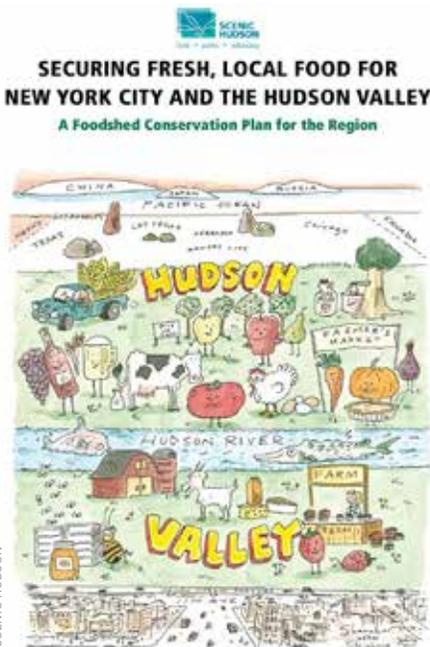
"Our District 220 involvement is exciting because it is an integral part of the science curriculum. For years the district has worked to build an entire science curriculum that connects from year to year, and we are very pleased to be part of that," says Sam Oliver, CFC staff director.



DIANE BODKIN

Two fourth graders have fun learning at Citizens for Conservation's Flint Creek Savanna preserve.

Blueprint to Protect a Regional Foodshed



**SECURING FRESH, LOCAL FOOD FOR
NEW YORK CITY AND THE HUDSON VALLEY**
A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region

SCENIC HUDSON

Cartoonist Danny Shanahan based the cover of the report on "View of the World from 9th Avenue" by fellow *New Yorker* illustrator Saul Steinberg.

Scenic Hudson has created a first-of-its-kind strategic blueprint to ensure that New York City and the Hudson Valley will have fresh, locally produced food for years to come. In a report released in June, the conservation organization urges the city and surrounding communities to conserve agricultural lands in their "foodshed," just as the city invested to protect upstate lands critical to its drinking water supplies in its watershed.

The report, "Securing Fresh, Local Food for New York City and the Hudson Valley: A Foodshed Conservation Plan for the Region," was funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. It identifies the most critical unprotected agricultural lands in 11 counties within 150 miles of Manhattan by analyzing and ranking agricultural properties for soil quality, parcel size and proximity to other agriculture.

Scenic Hudson is calling on public-private partnerships to join in conserving critical agricultural lands, and hopes to build alliances with the food justice movement, farmers markets and others within the city. The initiative has gained praise from best-selling food writer Michael Pollan, the executive director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and elected officials.

The foodshed plan "provides the data, rationale and strategy to take farmland protection in the region to a whole new level," says Steve Rosenberg, executive director of the Scenic Hudson Land Trust. "It communicates the urgency of conserving our family farms, the foundation of the region's robust agricultural economy, and offers a method for prioritizing farmland protection to ensure the greatest possible public and economic benefits from stakeholders' investments."

The methodology can be applied to other geographical areas, he adds. "Our hope is that other people will see it as a model that could be replicated elsewhere."

The report is available at www.scenichudson.org/foodshedplan. •

Greener Cities Are Happier Cities

People living in urban areas with greater amounts of green space are happier than other urban dwellers, according to a recently published study in the journal *Psychological Science*. Researchers for the European Centre for Environment & Human Health and University of Exeter reviewed data on more than 10,000 individuals to explore the relationship between urban green space and well-being.

"Controlling for individual and regional covariates, we found that, on average, individuals have both lower mental distress and higher well-being when living in urban areas with more green space," the authors summarize. "Although effects at the individual level were small, the potential cumulative benefit at the community level highlights the importance of policies to protect and promote urban green spaces for well-being." For more information: www.ecehh.org/publication/would-you-be-happier-living-greener-urban-area •

Women's Projects Benefit Australian Nature

To help the Regent Honeyeater, a diminutive yellow and black bird that is slowly recovering from low numbers, women conservationists in Victoria, Australia, contributed to a project to plant half a million trees across land owned by more than 100 farmers. The women ranged from scientists to management committee members to farmers to primary school principals.

Another project plans to rally 1 million women across Australia to each save one ton of carbon over the course of a year. Women can join the challenge online and be inspired "to get on with climate action, cut pollution from our daily lives, live more sustainably and be a powerful voice for change."

These women and many more were celebrated during International Women's Day at a breakfast held by Australia's oldest land trust, Trust for Nature. The breakfast was supported by Bush Heritage Australia and sponsored by Parks Victoria.

For more about Trust for Nature, visit www.trustfornature.org.au. •

Trading Concrete for Green School Grounds

Removing asphalt and concrete to make way for green space on Chicago school playgrounds has become routine for Openlands. The conservation organization has helped 54 schools build gardens and green space in the Chicago Public School district, often taking out impermeable surfaces in the process. This summer Openlands helped remove a large traditional play structure of slides and climbing equipment on a cement slab at Nathanael Greene Elementary School.

“It’s the first time we’ve moved playground equipment to make room for more flexible green space,” says Jaime Zaplatosch, Openlands director of education. In its place is a field that can be used as an outdoor classroom, soccer field or for any number of activities. Surrounding the field are a rain garden, boulders, ADA-compliant pathways, tree stumps and nooks for unstructured play, exploration and scientific observation.

Openlands’ community greening and education initiatives received national attention April 11 during a visit from then U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Regina Benjamin to Greene Elementary. The school earned Gold-level recognition from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s HealthierUS School Challenge, a cornerstone of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! initiative.



Elementary school students help give their playground a green makeover.

Before investing in a schoolyard makeover, Openlands needs to know there is buy-in at the school. A garden committee of school staff, parents and students help plan the changes, and students and their families plant the new vegetation. Openlands trains teachers how to use the space as an outdoor classroom, and it monitors school gardens to see if they continue to be used by students and maintained. (So far, 91% are.)

In a city where students may not have access to a park or yard, “our bigger mission is to create that daily connection with nature,” says Zaplatosch. •

Books Meet Nature on Story Walk



Children eagerly walk the nature trail to hear the next part of the story.

Sometimes it takes incentives to encourage young children to undertake even a short hike. This summer those incentives came in the form of a picture book, posted page by page along a small loop trail at one of Finger Lakes Land Trust’s preserves in central New York.

The “story walk” was made possible by a grant from a library friends group, and promoted through local parenting listservs, on the land trust’s Facebook page and in newspapers.

At the story walk kickoff event, families received a free copy of the featured book, Chris Van Allsburg’s *Just a Dream*. An early childhood education specialist led a hike to read the heavily laminated pages, posted every few hundred feet along the trail. While children were eager to find the next page along the trail, there were plenty of natural distractions, says land trust Director of Development Kelly Makosch. “Along the way we found salamanders, funny-looking bugs and weird mushrooms.” •

Broad Coalition Supports LWCF

The American Heart Association, NAACP, US Soccer Foundation and 15 other organizations are asking Michelle Obama to include full and permanent funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) as a key component of her Let's Move! initiative, through which the First Lady champions healthy eating and exercise.

Health advocacy organizations are increasingly recognizing the important role of green space and parks. A 2012 American Heart Association study showed that people with neighborhood access to parks and trails as well as access to healthy foods are more likely to be in better cardiovascular health.

This year the Land Trust Alliance helped to secure a record 206 congressional signatures on letters of support for robust LWCF funding, but House appropriators proposed eliminating the program. Visit www.lta.org/lwcf for copies of the letters, updates on the Alliance's effort to restore funding, and information about S. 338, the bill to reauthorize funding for LWCF. •

Reforesting the Mississippi Watershed

The transportation company Norfolk Southern is planting 6 million trees on 10,000 acres in the Mississippi Alluvial Valley in partnership with GreenTrees®, a forest restoration and carbon sequestration program. The \$5.6 million, five-year "Trees and Trains" effort is projected to generate 1.12 million tons of carbon-offset credits. Under the program, landowners receive carbon payments for planting trees instead of crops on marginal or frequently flooded land.

Forest once covered 25 million acres of the valley, but most of the land was converted to agricultural production, and today only 4 million acres of forest remain.

Trees and Trains is one of several initiatives Norfolk Southern has under way as part of its woodlands sustainability project. The company is also supporting research by The Longleaf Alliance to restore longleaf pine forest ecosystems in the South and American Chestnut Foundation, which is working to reestablish American chestnut trees to their native range through planting initiatives at former coal mine sites.

See <http://vimeo.com/greentrees/planting>. •



Reading Camp Calvert participants learning about bugs

MARY BURKE

Partnership Sponsors Reading Camp

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." – Dr. Seuss

A group of local churches joined forces with the American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT) to bring the outdoors in to Reading Camp Calvert, a free one-week, nonreligious literacy program for low-income elementary school children struggling with reading.

In the morning, children worked with volunteer tutors to strengthen their reading skills and stem summer reading loss. After book-filled mornings, campers took the afternoons off to have fun. One afternoon ACLT farm manager Jeff Clapper brought bugs and fun to campers. He brought Japanese beetles, potato beetles and other critters to teach the kids about harmful and helpful bugs and how they impact a farm. After Clapper's talk, the campers went outside to catch their own bugs and to plant beans that they took home. "It was cool, and I liked learning about the little Japanese beetles," remarked camper Katie Lehman.

"The camp is based on a very successful program that began in Lexington, Kentucky, and has spread to six states and South Africa and Cameroon," says Mary Burke, Reading Camp Calvert board member and Land Trust Alliance staffer. "We're very excited to bring the camp to Maryland and to work with ACLT. What could be better than combining reading with nature?" 🌿