



SPRING 2011 NEWSLETTER

Located in Greeley, CO, the Weld County Youth Conservation Corps (WCYCC) serves youth and young adults from ages 11-24 by providing them with meaningful service opportunities in the realms of conservation (land, water, and energy) and community service through both year-round and seasonal programs.

As cold weather comes and goes, Weld County Youth Conservation Corps crews persist in various projects throughout the community. WCYCC's TIGHT corps has combated local snow by shoveling it as referrals for snow removal are received from community agencies such as United Way. Corps members have additionally helped throughout the community by assisting individuals' moving efforts and cleaning up along the Poudre River Trail.

On February 16, WCYCC's AmeriCorps program enrolled seven new members for its chainsaw crew. These corps members will complete a twelve-week project on five properties along the Big Thompson River in partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to eradicate invasive Russian Olive trees. Before beginning work, corps members completed an orientation and training which included an introduction to WCYCC and the AmeriCorps program, chemical safety training, and MTDC chainsaw safety training provided by Colorado Firecamp.

In addition to new work, however, the new year also marks milestones to be celebrated. On February 7th, one AmeriCorps member traveled to the State Capitol to be honored in the Colorado Youth Corps Association's Corps Member of the Year celebration. GED achievements were also celebrated on February 11th, when one AmeriCorps member and four TIGHT corps members were honored for having received their GEDs since August 2010. Finally, on February 18th, four corps members celebrated their graduation from the TIGHT program, marking completion of six months of hard work towards obtaining GEDs and completing community service projects throughout the county.

WCYCC AmeriCorps Crew Kicks Off New Saw Work with Training



Corps members clean saws after a hard day's work

Before beginning work, members participated in MTDC chainsaw training which consisted of a classroom portion, where corps members learned basic safety and saw maintenance, as well as a field evaluation where sawyers received their certification from two Colorado Firecamp instructors. In addition to

technical training, corps member Chris explains that handling saws with finesse rather than force and maintaining a positive rather than a cocky attitude are also critical to quality work.

An experienced sawyer, Chris describes the Russian olives as "unpredictable" because of

their menacing thorns, multiple and leaning trunks, and sprawling branches. As a result, removing Russian Olives becomes a team effort; while one sawyer is responsible for cutting down the tree, swampers haul it out for limbing and bucking — first removing the tree's branches and then cutting it into smaller pieces.



Saw work is a team effort!

WCYCC's AmeriCorps chainsaw crew engages young adults on conservation-based (land and water) projects throughout Weld County. Seven new members enrolled in the program in February to begin saw work along the Big Thompson River where invasive Russian Olive trees abound, consuming large volumes of water and outcompeting native plants.

WCYCC Corps Members Participate in Martin Luther King Jr. Day Service Projects

In addition to these ongoing projects, both WCYCC's TIGHT and AmeriCorps crews participated in projects on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, on Monday, January 17th. WCYCC's TIGHT crew joined community members in Greeley's largest ever MLK Day march and the celebration which followed at the Union Colony Civic Center and featured Dominique Dawes as a guest speaker. In a reflection activity following the march, TIGHT corps members brainstormed ways to help out the community.

Highlights include:

- 1) Seek more closure than justice (turn the other cheek)
- 2) Carpool to slow down pollution
- 3) Help the police keep the city safe
- 4) Have empathy
- 5) Stop violence
- 6) Help keep my community clean by picking up trash when I see it
- 7) Volunteer to help senior citizens
- 8) Show a positive attitude and show everybody respect
- 9) Don't glamorize drugs or violence

On the same day, WCYCC coordinated a project to bring together its AmeriCorps crew with Weld County VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America), Aims Student United Way, and local mural artist Armando Silva at c.a.r.e. (Child Advocacy Resource and Education) to create and paint two new murals, refurbish an existing mural and repaint the facility's kitchen. c.a.r.e. House is a supervised visitation and exchange program, providing a safe environment for families and children that allows them to maintain positive family interactions.



Corps member Ricky focuses on repainting c.a.r.e.'s kitchen space



Corps member Manuel gives crew leader Holly tips to complete a mural representing Colorado

The project was truly a group effort, as various community members and organizations contributed their advice and time. In addition to WCYCC corps members, 14 volunteers were present. Local mural artist Armando Silva contributed his creativity throughout the project by adding bold, blue swirls to brighten the background, while Aims Student United Way President Amber Sabine contributed her artistic background by leading a group in painting vivid fish.



Aims United Way President Amber and VISTA volunteer Anna paint vibrant fish

The project also required creativity and commitment on behalf of corps members and volunteers to sufficiently prepare the week before Martin Luther King day.

Corps member Manuel put his artistic talent to use by designing a mural to represent c.a.r.e. House, Weld County, and Colorado, while Erika and Beth from United Way of Weld County assisted corps members in taping off and priming the kitchen space. Librarian and veteran mural artist Sue Safarik also contributed her artistic experience, suggesting the use of creative tools to create texture and sectioning off parts of the mural for volunteers to individualize. As a result of these combined creative efforts, the group successfully repainted the facility's kitchen and created murals which provide a fun and vibrant scenery for the families c.a.r.e. serves.

TIGHT Corps Members Receive GEDs and Graduate from TIGHT Program

At Employment Services' biannual GED celebration on February 11th, TIGHT corps members Steven and Jacob, who obtained their GEDs in fall 2010 and were recently accepted into Aims Community College, were joined by corps members Otoniel and Nick who obtained their GEDs in 2011. County Commissioner Bill Garcia served as the event's guest speaker; he underlined the significance of the graduates' accomplishments and spoke to obstacles that many overcame to be present.

Otoniel explains that he is the first person in his family to receive a GED or equivalent. His next steps are to get his driver's license so that he can become more mobile and transport himself to work once he obtains employment. One of his favorite things about being in TIGHT has been visiting the Pawnee Buttes because, as he explains, "it's a relaxing place to go."

Nick, who returned to the TIGHT program in 2011, knocked out his GED

within two weeks with very limited tutoring. He plans to continue his education through general coursework at Aims Community College following his experience with TIGHT. He explains that he has learned from his experiences with TIGHT that he much prefers working outside to being indoors and plans to pursue a career that would allow him to experience the outdoors regularly and travel.

Four corps members, who were enrolled in TIGHT for up to six months, marked their completion of the program on Friday, February 18th. Each corps member prepared a speech to reflect on his/her experiences with TIGHT and positive

memories. These were wide-ranging and demonstrated different aspects of the TIGHT program: working at Fort Lupton, rock climbing at UNC, and exploring the Pawnee Buttes. These corps members will continue to work with case managers in Employment Services to pursue job opportunities opened to them now that they have received their GEDs.



TIGHT corps members participate in teambuilding activities through rock climbing

WCYCC Corps Member Honored at Youth Corps Award Ceremony

On February 7th, the Colorado Youth Corps Association honored 10 Corps members of the Year from youth corps across the state. CYCA Executive Director Jennifer Freeman described the recipients and recognized that "[i]n many cases, these Corps members of the Year overcame personal barriers and capitalized on support from their youth corps to serve our state, further their education, learn to work hard, and look toward bright futures."

Corps member Erik Michalski was recognized by Senator Scott Renfroe as WCYCC's Corps member of the Year for his positive attitude and work ethic. Erik demonstrated these characteristics through his persistence in completing WCYCC's TIGHT program, securing a summer job, and obtaining his GED in under a month. After obtaining his GED, Erik was re-hired by WCYCC as a swamper for the chainsaw crew in fall 2010. Known as "Batman" by fellow corps members, he continues to be an asset to the crew by contributing his ever-present sense of humor and optimism.

Erik explains that his time with WCYCC has helped him to learn how to work effectively within a team to accomplish a task, which has better prepared him for future jobs. Following his term of service, Erik plans to either pursue a job with Greeley's Department of Public Works or continue onto college, where he will study business.



Senator Scott Renfroe & Corps member Erik

Learn & Serve Summer of Service Program to Host Two Five-Week Sessions

WCYCC's Learn & Serve program offers youth, who will be entering 6th through 9th grades in the fall, the opportunity to participate in community service projects throughout Weld County with the goal of motivating youth to become involved in their communities and pursue higher education. Upon completion of a five-week service session, participants receive a \$500 education award which they can use to pay for education expenses at qualified institutions of higher education.

Last summer, 71 Learn & Serve participants were involved in community service projects at five host sites throughout Weld County — the Poudre Learning Center, Fort Lupton, St. Vrain State Park, Severance, and Johnstown/Milliken. These youth completed over 7,100 hours of service. Projects ranged from painting at community centers and other public facilities, beautifying local parks, and restoring historic sites, commonly providing participants with a wide variety of work experience.

To complement corps members' work, Environmental Education Coordinator Kyle Sullivan developed educational sessions to help participants to connect to environmental



Learn & Serve corps members gardening at local park in Severance

issues both locally and nationally. Lessons focused on the conservation of natural resources through exploring topics such as Colorado's most wanted weeds and the Gulf oil spill.

Youth interested in participating in the program this year should contact Program Coordinator Shannon Kinahan at skinahan@co.weld.co.us or by phone at 970-353-3800, ext. 6761. Applications will be due on April 29th.

WCYCC Crew Leader Returns from Military Training

Crew leader Chris Williams returned from basic and aviation training on Tuesday, February 22nd to continue his work with WCYCC's TIGHT corps. He explains that his time in training helped him to develop leadership and teamwork skills that he hopes to incorporate into his work with the youth corps.

Chris began working with WCYCC in April 2008 because of his interest in demonstrating to youth their ability to overcome their circumstances and effect positive change in their lives. His favorite part of the job is learning about the corps members he works with and watching them succeed. This, he explains, overshadows any bad day.



Chris back at work

Save the Date...

3/1/2011... Learn & Serve applications available through Employment Services through 4/29

4/1/2011... Summer corps member & staff positions open

4/15/2011... Volunteer tree planting day at historic Fort Lupton

5/16 - 5/20... In-house summer staff training

5/23 - 5/27... Statewide crew leader training

5/31... Summer TIGHT and Learn & Serve programs begin

6/1... Summer AmeriCorps programs begin

8/5... Summer graduation

Contact Erik Warrington at ewarrington@co.weld.co.us for more information on how to apply

1861-2011



Weld County Youth Conservation Corps:

Dedicated to a brighter future through Diversity, Education, & Teamwork