



NEWS

Fall 2015



Autumn brought new projects and experience to all at OEC. We sent a preservation crew to Saratoga Springs, hosted a Taste of the World event for our supporters and took good care of our roots, too, planting over 600 trees across CNY and graduating 12 crewmembers from our program on to the next part of their careers.

www.onondagaearthcorps.org



There's still time to donate— you can help OEC make 2016 another terrific success!
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OEC's New H.O.P.E.: Preservation Work in Saratoga Springs

Onondaga Earth Corps traveled to Historic Saratoga Springs, NY, as part of the *Hands On Preservation Experience Project* (HOPE Crew) launched by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and The Corps Network to train young people in preservation skills and to restore historic sites on public lands.

For over a year, OEC worked to bring this project to life. It was a new opportunity to work with historic preservation craftsmen with professional contractors and federal agencies, and learn unique skills passed down through generations. It was also a chance to grow and build new program capacity for OEC. "It was an opportunity that we could not afford to miss," says HOPE Crew Leader and Coordinator, Ioane Etuale.

In September, five crewmembers were trained to participate on two projects. One crew worked side by side with a National Parks Service preservation mason. Their task was to re-point joints of the 1877 Saratoga Monument that commemorates the Battle of Saratoga, which is said to be the turning point of the Revolutionary War. A second crew teamed up with experts from Old Saratoga Restoration to paint the exterior of the Gideon Putnam Hotel.

Etuale led a crew of three young adults on a masonry crew at the Monument. Crewmembers had



Top: DEC Youth Crew at work on the last day of fall program
Above: HOPE Crew at Saratoga National Monument

hands-on experience removing, mixing and reapplying mortar to the exterior of the monument as well as detailed cleaning of interior murals and statues.

Nineteen year old Syracuse native, John Darby, started as a young adult with the OEC Tree Crew in the spring. He came back right in time for the Saratoga project. John learned to operate an aerial lift, as well as to mix and apply mortar. "Working at the Saratoga Monument has built my confidence. I think I can do this kind of work at home or as a job," John said in during project debrief.

Kelly Beaudoin, a History major from an Albany area college had hands-on history lessons while cleaning monument murals and in descriptions from animated park rangers telling stories of the battle. "I can't believe I never knew about such an important piece of history that is right here," he said.

OEC founder, Eli MacDonald led up the painting crew at the historic Gideon Putnam Hotel, located in the Saratoga Spa State Park. Crew-members were trained on leadsafe work practices, paint removal, surface preparation, painting and lift operating. Old Saratoga Restoration is known for its high quality historic preservation work.

Crewmember, Devontae Randall commented, "This experience is great. I'm learning and I love to work. In the long run, I'll be able to explain the importance of historic preservation and I'll be able to paint on my own and make some money. Having all the details, I'll be able to get the job done right."

The HOPE Crew successfully wrapped up in October and looks forward to the future projects in 2016.



*Top: John Darby smiling through his day of work re-pointing the masonry at Saratoga National Monument
Middle: Anthony works alongside experts at the Gideon Putnam.
Right: From-the-ground view of the painting crew at work.*

"At Onondaga Earth Corps, I was given the opportunity to work on a project that would help the organization expand nationally, the project was called HOPE..."

*-Devontae Randall, OEC
CM Summer and Fall 2015*

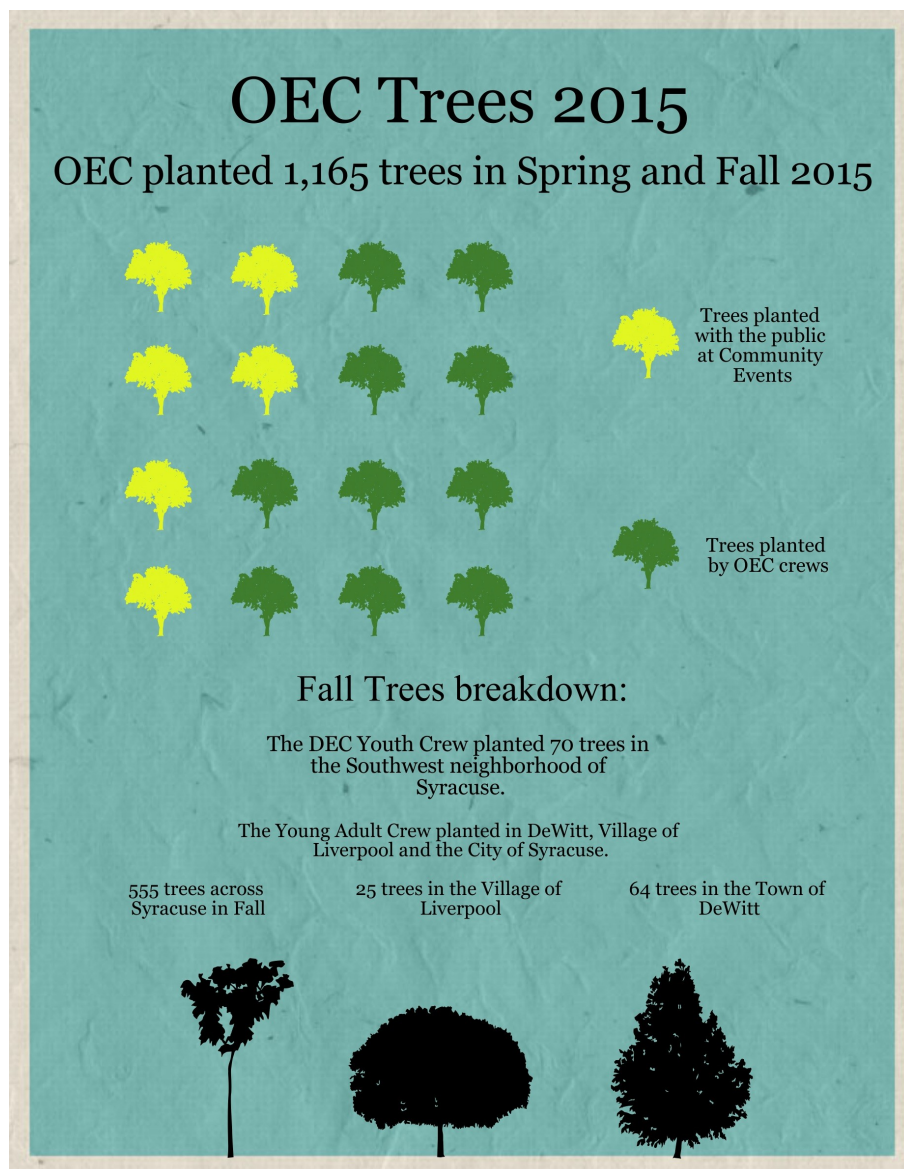


OEC and CCE Engage the Community for Tree Planting



In partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, the OEC Tree Program hosted eight community plantings and one additional training session this Fall. In addition to the three plantings hosted in the springtime and participating in the annual Home Headquarters Block Blitz, youth from our program participated in a total of 13 community engagement events. At each event they lead by example and engaged the public on the importance of a healthy urban forest and stormwater management.

Of the 1,165 trees planted by OEC in 2015, over 300 were planted at public events with over 100 community members. That means that for every three and a half trees planted by the OEC crew, one was planted in collaboration with volunteers from local neighborhoods, engaged in learning about the urban forest and why it is important to a thriving community.



Urban Forestry Thrives at OEC

This fall, crews planted 699 trees across Central New York. That brings the 2015 tree season to a close with a new OEC record: 1,165 trees planted in one year!

New partnerships were a big part of how OEC grew this year. New and developing collaboration with the Town of DeWitt and the Village of Liverpool provided opportunity for crewmembers to share their experience planting street trees and beautifying neighborhoods outside Syracuse.

There was also the much gratifying work of planting trees in the Southwest neighborhood of Syracuse, where OEC got its start.

A crew of three youth planted 70 trees in six weeks. Several of these trees are fruit-bearing and will be cared for at the Southwest Community Learning Farm as part of their growing urban agriculture education efforts. All of these trees were planted in locations inventoried, then recruited through personal contact with property owners by the youth crew.

The Young Adult crew carried out another successful season planting in the City of Syracuse for the Save The Rain Tree Planting program, planting over 500 trees and engaging over 100 volunteers in collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Youth Speak On Pathways to Opportunity

Part of the on-going development for crewmembers at OEC is their support in preparing for the career they intend to pursue. This year, thanks to the AmeriCorps positions made available to OEC by Headwaters Youth Conservation Corps and The Corps Network, there was expanded opportunity for crewmembers to explore their educational and professional interests.

Devontae Randall had the opportunity to work with OEC on the exciting preservation project in Saratoga Springs (See page 1). A hard worker over the summer youth program with CNYWorks on the Green Infrastructure team, Devontae brought his lessons learned and work ethic to the painting project at the historic Gideon Putnam preservation project. He had this to say: “My experience at OEC has been great. Starting all the way back to July when I began working here as a Youth Crew member. At OEC we strive to help the communities in our town stay clean and pollution free.” When asked how he felt about Saratoga HOPE Crew Devontae responded, “I am very confident about my skill level now. I’ve never done painting before but now I can do it in a professional level and I can teach it to others too.”

Tyrell Ivey joined OEC during the Spring 2015 L&M Training session and was consistently focused on his goal of becoming a musician and produce his own music. During his time at OEC, Tyrell’s professional demeanor was a positive influence on his crewmembers. Through the gracious assistance of local



Devontae, Anthony and Tyrell building a rain garden for OEC clients on Jerome

recording studio, SubCat, Tyrell interned in a music production setting for two months and had the opportunity to work with local and national musicians. “Tyrell was great to have around,” Jeremy Johnston, owner of SubCat, reported. Tyrell says, “Thank you

so much for that opportunity, it was so good, especially because that [music] is what I want to do.”

Checkout the good works of these members at the Gideon Putnam project in Saratoga Springs (www.gideonputnam.com/about-us), and during events at SubCat studios in Armory Square, Syracuse (www.subcat.net).



OEC’s Tree and Plant Nursery next door to the Kwanza Garden spent the Fall season under harvest and winter preparations. Stay tuned for news from the Spring Crew on this project!

Tastes of the World Fundraiser for OEC

Over 90 gathered on November 7th for OEC's first Tastes of the World celebration. The event brought together OEC crewmembers, families and supporters to recognize 2015 accomplishments, raise funds and enjoy tasty cuisine prepared by My Luck Tummy in collaboration with two young adults from the OEC family. Katherine, a summer program crewmember was nominated as a chef after she impressed her fellow crewmembers with a spicy fish and rice dish during our summer orientation. Adam Sudmann of MLT coached Katherine to prepare a spicy Liberian palm butter soup. Samaya, the sister of crewmember and new assistant crew leader, Mokhtar Mohammadi, also worked with Adam to prepare Afghan sweet leek dumplings. The menu was rounded off with a Bhutanese curried kabocha and dessert. Local beer was provided by Griffin Hill Farm Brewery.

The event was great opportunity for crew members to share their successes, as graduating

crewmember Quan Hayes did (see photo).

The board is already planning for next year. Feel free to contact asamuels@oei2.org if you are interested in joining the planning committee!



Earlquan Hayes spoke to the Taste the World audience on how OEC has helped him personally and professionally.

ABOUT THE ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS

The Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) is a youth development and employment program for youth ages 15 to 25 living in the City of Syracuse. As youth work on community and environmental service projects, they learn valuable job and life skills, community based problem solving skills, civic engagement, and environmental stewardship and technical skills.

OEC began in 2004 as the Eli MacDonald Green Team, a neighborhood initiative to beautify the community and employ youth. In 2005, the program changed its name to the Onondaga Earth Corps and incorporated the youth conservation corps model. Since then, under the leadership of many community collaborators, the OEC has become a leading force in revitalizing our urban environment through urban forestry, green infrastructure and outreach efforts throughout the City of Syracuse.

OEC activities are made possible in part by funding from Onondaga County's Save the Rain campaign, as well as our ongoing support from Onondaga Environmental Institute and SUNY Educational Opportunity Center.

THE VISION

- Help youth understand the relationship between people and the urban ecosystem
- Engage youth in hands-on community and environment service learning projects
- Train youth for future jobs and careers in environmental fields
- Empower youth by developing their leadership abilities that help them analyze situations, solve problems and implement strategies to improve their communities.

DONATE YOUR TIME, TALENT, CAPITAL

Support the work of the Onondaga Earth Corps however suits you best! We are always looking for creative ways to grow our program. YOU CAN HELP! Visit www.onondagaeearthcorps.org for more details.

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