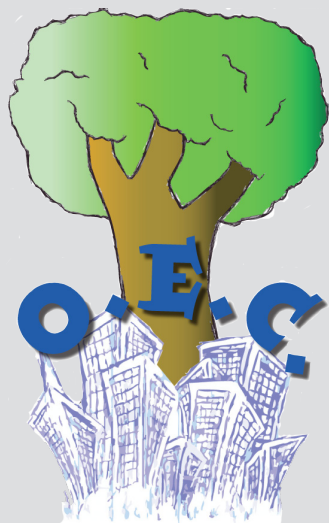




NEWS

12.2014



www.onondagaeearthcorps.org

Fall season brought new opportunities and achievements to the OEC Crew. We planted over 600 trees, participated in 7 community events, hosted our first Adopt-A-Tree Workshop and released our youth-developed outreach videos.

Most excitingly, Onondaga Earth Corps also celebrated 10 years of environmental stewardship, youth employment and community development. We continue our fundraising efforts to improve our program opportunities and provide a rewarding and unique youth experience to Syracuse.



*Top: Arbor day at Danforth School
Bottom: Charles and Ioane award crew members certificates at the Celebration.*

Our 10th year of work in Syracuse was one of the best yet! Many thanks are due to our supporters! Thank you to our Save the Rain partners -- Onondaga County WEP, City of Syracuse Parks Dept., Cornell Cooperative Extension -- Francesca's Cucina, the Gifford Foundation, the CNY Community Foundation, Onondaga Environmental Institute, Atlantic States Legal Foundation, SUNY Educational Opportunity Center, and Syracuse Housing Authority.

On November 16th over 90 Onondaga Earth Corps alumni, current crew members, staff, and community supporters gathered at Francesca's Cucina to celebrate our 10th anniversary. Crew members from as early as 2009 and as far as North Carolina joined us to celebrate the accomplishments of the last 10 years.

During those 10 years, OEC trained and employed 135 youth and young adults to plant over 2,500 trees, install 10 rain gardens, and educate over 4,000 children and community members about the importance of the environment.

Previous crew members Iraida Huertas (Yaya) and Tyrone Cannon impressed the crowd with testimony about the program's impacts. Yaya shared how OEC has empowered her, opened her eyes to the environment, and helped her be successful in future jobs. She is currently saving up to go to school in North Carolina for environmental education. Tyrone shared how, fresh out of prison, OEC gave



Above: Yaya, a former crewmember, engages the guests with her inspirational story

him his first shot at a job and helped him get on his feet.

Later, 2014 young adult crew members received certificates of completion and shared how OEC helped them learn to trust one another, work well as a team, and give their all.

Several in the crowd were brought to tears at the end of the night, when we watched a 10th anniversary video and acknowledged the great leadership and contributions of the late Kathy

Goldfarb-Findling. Kathy's passion for the program and the community lives on at OEC.

Visit onondagaeearthcorps.org/10yrs to see slide show, video and pictures from the event. Special thanks to our events sponsors – the Gifford Foundation, Syracuse University Falcone Center for Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Enterprise Partnership, and the Central New York Community Foundation.

Mayor, Students & OEC Plant 3,500th Save the Rain Tree



*Left: Students display Syracuse's Tree City USA flag and Save the Rain banner
Right: Mokhtar Mohammadi and Gifford Foundation Staff*

Below: Stephanie Miner, Madison Quinn and Students plant the 3,500th tree

Onondaga Earth Corps planted 647 trees this fall, bringing our yearly total to 1,120 street trees planted with Save the Rain and other partners (see "OEC Youth Crew Blitz."). Of the 1,120 trees planted this year, one very special tree stands out. With the help of Mayor Stephanie Miner, Madison Quinn from Onondaga County, and youth from Danforth Elementary, OEC planted the city's 3,500th Save the Rain street tree.

Syracuse's Arbor Day Celebration was held in two parts at Danforth Elementary School. First, OEC Crew members and community forestry educators from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (CCE) met with students and teachers in the classroom. They taught lessons to 84 students on urban forestry, stormwater

management and Onondaga County's Save the Rain program. The next day, over 50 students and teachers joined the OEC crew, CCE team and Syracuse Parks Department in planting 19 trees.

The Young Adult Crew, in true OEC fashion, created a short skit to portray the importance of trees and their caretakers in our communities. Through jokes and playacting, the crew engaged the young audience and demonstrated valuable tree-planting tips for the soon-to-be tree stewards.

"We need trees for healthy communities."

-David Skevall, CCE Executive Director



OEC Member Wins Corpsmember of the Year National Award

Congratulations, Mokhtar Mohammadi! Mokhtar was recognized as one of five National Corpsmember of the Year by The Corps Network.

Mokhtar has been chosen for his outstanding commitment to his community, his dedication to service and conservation, and his achievements both as an individual and as part of a team working to improve Syracuse from the ground up.

From the start, Mokhtar has made an impression on staff and crew members alike at OEC. Always a dedicated worker, Mokhtar says, "The Onondaga Earth Corps helped me very much in my personal life. It wasn't just a job; it was a job and educational opportunity."

The Corps Network, a national organization for Service and Conservation Corps, solicits nominations for five Corpsmember of the Year awards. Mokhtar will also participate in the national Corps Network Conference, in February, as an honoree and a speaker.

Read Mokhtar's full story!

<http://www.corpsnetwork.org/refugee-afghanistan-plants-legacy-trees-syracuse>



OEC Youth Crew 'Blitz': OEC Supports ASLF Brownfield Reforestation Project

Below: Youth and young adult crewmembers plant along Onondaga Creek Parkway for Atlantic States Legal Foundation's brownfield remediation program.

Below Center: An overview shot of the many trees planted thanks to the ASLF program.



This year, OEC had the exciting opportunity to partner with the Atlantic States Legal Foundation (ASLF) on the reforestation of brownfield sites as part of an Onondaga County project supported through the U.S. Forest Service's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. OEC planted 194 trees along Onondaga Creek Parkway. ASLF also partnered with other volunteers and community based groups such as Catholic Charities Project Joseph to plant over 400 trees.

These trees provided a learning opportunity for the OEC crews. They were containerized, adding a new skill to the OEC crew's tree planting repertoire. It was also an opportunity for the OEC Youth crew to swing into action.

Five OEC youth crew alumni returned for a 2-day, high intensity tree planting session in September. This 'blitz' program taught the youth the specifics of containerized

tree planting style, and challenged them to plant 21 such trees in 3 hours with the help of a few young adult crew members.

True to form, the OEC youth met and exceeded this challenge, and are the proud planters of the reforested Onondaga Creek Parkway.

These ASLF trees also provided the chance to partner once again with the Urban Waters training program, hosted by Onondaga Environmental Institute and L&M Training Center, to provide hands-on experience to students there.



Youth Intern Update

by OEC Intern McKinley Sereluca

Below: McKinley joined OEC in October from our partners at CNY Works



After deciding to drop out of high school, I got into the CNY Works Youth development program. I took four of their job prep classes before they sent me to the Onondaga Earth Corps. Here I've done so many new things.

I've learned how to collect data and use computer programs. I helped the tree planting crew by planting trees and maintaining tools. I made calls to homeowners and landlords to get approvals to plant trees in the spring of 2015. I also helped with the big community tree planting event held at Rose Hill Cemetery and at OEC's 10th Anniversary Celebration.

I'm enrolled in a GED program so I can move on to college, to become a master auto mechanic. I've enjoyed my time here at OEC, I feel like I'm doing something productive to help the environment while I try to further my education.

Young Adult Crew Engages Community



Above: Mokhtar helping DeWitt residents plant trees in their neighborhood.

Below Right:

The Onondaga Earth Corps Young Adult Crew participated in a total of 12 community and volunteer events throughout 2014. Seven of these were during the fall season: community plantings for Onondaga Community College students, Huntington Family Center participants, the Town of DeWitt, and Arbor Day at Danforth Elementary; the Crew Leader

training for CCE CommuniTree stewards the week before the city Community planting; the Community Planting at Rose Hill Cemetery; and the Block Blitz sponsored by Home Headquarters.

These seven events alone reached over 300 community members and volunteers. That's 50 community members for every one Young Adult Crewmember employed.

OEC Fact Check

2014 Year to Date Statistics

- 35 Youth trained in job readiness, green infrastructure and urban forestry
- 26 Youth employed
- 7 Videos created
- 894 Save the Rain trees planted
- 205 ASLF trees planted
- 21 DeWitt trees planted
- 900 Trees Maintained
- 112 Trees adopted
- Over 1300 educated
- 12 Community Events

OEC Hosts Adopt-a-Tree Workshop



OEC hosted its first Adopt-A-Tree Community Workshop in October 2014. Using social media techniques begun in the Summer Program. OEC and 6 proud tree adopters learned more about the

Adopt-A-Tree program from OEC staff, and previewed videos created to guide their work.

Through the Adopt-a-Tree program, OEC youth recruit homeowners to become stewards and caregivers to newly planted Save the Rain trees. Adopters sign on to watering, weeding and mulching their trees.

At the workshop Steve Harris, City/County Arborist, demonstrated best practices in tree pruning and OEC provided tree care items to attendees.

OEC Co-Facilitates Green Infrastructure Workshop



On October 23rd, OEC teamed up with Save the Rain partners – Environmental Finance Center, Onondaga Environmental Institute and Onondaga County Water Environment Protection – to put on a green infrastructure maintenance workshop held at the Syracuse Center of Excellence.

The workshop covered an overview of the Save the Rain program, an explanation as to why green infrastructure truly is public infrastructure, best maintenance practices for grey and green spaces, and a roundtable discussion about the challenges and successes of managing new GI installation.

Workshop materials are posted at <http://savetherain.us/resources/maintenance/>

2014 Fundraising Continues

- get your 10th anniversary T-shirt while they last

Thank you to everyone who has made our ongoing fundraising efforts successful! We are embarking on a major fund development campaign to raise \$40,000 towards building the infrastructure and administrative backbone necessary to grow the program and make a stable leap in to becoming a 501 (c) (3).

We are excited to announce our new T-Shirt design! The design on the front celebrates crew members from the past 10 years, with each member's name printed in the number 10 (pictured at right). On the back is a map of Syracuse with key landmarks and program impacts. Get yours today for \$20 and support our next 10 years of achievement!

Also special thanks to Patty Weisse and Jackie Michel, worked with the OEC board to host fundraising events in the fall. Smock also supported OEC through their annual sidewalk sale. Thank you Patty, Jackie and all at Smock!



Onondaga Earth Corps 10 year Anniversary T-Shirts are on sale now!

Contact us to get yours today!

Community Need

Youth in the City of Syracuse face tremendous challenges including, high rates of unemployment, poverty and crime; increasingly limited funding for not-for-profit educational and social services; historic disinvestment in many of the City's neighborhoods; and disproportionate environmental risks and hazards. Youth are also often perceived as a problem for communities to solve rather than an asset and opportunity for revitalization. OEC provides a unique opportunity that addresses these challenges from numerous angles.

The Response - OEC

OEC uses the same conservation corps model that has been used successfully and effectively throughout the United States since the 1930's to address critical environmental and human service needs. Onondaga Earth Corps provides youth with:

- a positive work environment that promotes success for all youth no matter what their challenges
- job readiness and professionalism training
- workers safety and logistics training
- technical training in urban forestry, landscaping and green infrastructure
- leadership and life skills training and in-the-field practice
- meaningful community based youth-led service projects, such as tree plant-

ing, street clean up, and videos that improve

conditions in the communities we serve

- tools and knowledge to educate the community about important environmental issues and civic engagement

OEC Needs your Support!

While OEC has been successful in growing capacity through partnerships, grants and fee based work, much of the infrastructure and staff time necessary to provide youth with the support they need to successfully complete our programs as well as to prepare them for future jobs or schooling is not covered by grant or fee-based deliverables. OEC is rallying our support base to build our capacity.

Organizational Capacity Building

In 2004 OEC launched as an 8 week summer program with no dedicated staff and one crew of 14-18 year olds. In 2014 OEC has five staff (1 FT, 4 PT), three crews and is operating close to year round. In 2014, the OEC Advisory Board has been developing policies and procedures to make the transition from program to organization. Steps the Board is taking to bring policies, systems and infrastructure in line with the growth of OEC include:

- hiring Executive Director
- development of employee handbook
- filing as a 501 (c) (3)

- developing staff training
- purchase truck, crew van, trailers
- establish quality & safety control procedures

Nurturing Roots Campaign -

A tree grows and thrives above ground when the environment at its feet is just right. Preparing a healthy environment for roots to spread underground and to absorb nutrients is equally important to the sunlight, water and protection trees receive above ground. So too is the case with the youth in Onondaga Earth Corps. While growth with our crew members is evident through their attitude, work and pride, there is much work "below the ground" that fosters their growth. Our *Nurturing Roots Campaign* focuses on generating support to fund the "roots" of Onondaga Corps as an organization that enable us to provide the youth development, career support, life coaching and empowerment that is essential for the continuation and success of Onondaga Earth Corps. If OEC raises just \$20 for each of the trees youth will plant in 2014, to support these costs, we will reach our goal of \$20,000.

Visit www.onondagaeearthcorps.org and click on "invest in OEC" to learn more about how you can contribute.



ABOUT THE ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS

The Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) is a youth development and employment program for youth ages 15-25 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, environmental stewardship and technical skills in urban forestry and other urban green infrastructure.

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 Syracuse.

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.

CONTACT

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with us!**



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Onondaga Environmental Institute is the fiscal sponsor of the Onondaga Earth Corps.

**The Power of
Opportunity**



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OEC activities are made possible in part through collaboration with Syracuse Educational Opportunity Center.

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.

**ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS
wants you to**

Save the Rain