

OEC NEWSLETTER

Official publication of the Onondaga Earth Corps

Holiday Greetings from the OEC Fundraising Committee

Dear OEC Friends,

Thank you for your continuing support of OEC through this tremendously trying year. We are deeply moved by the goodwill of OEC's partners, donors and volunteers. It is because of you that OEC is able to help illuminate the future of youth in our community and nurture their desires to grow and be engaged stewards of the environment. Your gifts of time, talent and dollars towards OEC's mission are received with heartfelt gratitude. We wish you and yours a safe and healthy holiday season.

If you would like to make a year end tax deductible contribution to OEC please visit www.onondagaeearthcorps.org/donate



OEC Staff members (left to right) Ben Loiselle, Mecca Little, Rehgan Machold, Amanda Cruty, Yvonne Chu, Jess Alighieri, Kat Korba, Meqdad Ali, Taj Martin, and Tay Stenson, and visiting guest dog Luna take a post program walk at the Rand Tract Park. Photo taken by Greg Michel.

Past Events:

Trivia Night- Hosted by Syracuse Trivia Co.

Oct 3, 2020 at 7PM - 8PM EST
Online Event
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/116632636355>

Earth Corps Encore

Nov. 7, 2020 at 7PM - 8PM EST
View the recorded online event!
www.onondagaeearthcorps.org/earthcorpsencore/
OR https://youtu.be/t_rTWhtOmpg



Upcomming Events:

Due to COVID-19 there are no current upcoming in-person events for the remainder of 2020.

Spring recruitment and virtual open house events coming soon!

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Position Release

Onondaga Earth Corps Administrative Assistant

December, 2020

The Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) is a youth development and conservation corps program focusing on community and environmental stewardship in the Greater Syracuse Metropolitan Area. OEC enrolls youth and young adults, ages 15 to 25, in "learn to earn" positions to educate the community about the benefits of environmental stewardship through completing environmental and neighborhood improvement projects. OEC has a strong experiential learning and service component, and often completes projects or arranges volunteer service within the community. OEC is seeking an administrative assistant to work with the Office Manager, Executive Director, and other program staff to manage administrative tasks and strengthen the capacity of the organization.

Administrative Assistant Responsibilities:

- Assist the Office Manager and Executive Director with administrative tasks

Administrative Assistant Job Duties:

- Aid the Office Manager with researching program development solutions
- Help OEC Fundraising committee with donation solicitation and tracking
- Work with Office Manager and Program Staff to help grow capacity of the organization
- Contribute to the website, social media content, and other public relations (print, radio, television, listserv, mailing list, etc.)
- Work with the Office Manager and Executive Director to acquire and maintain relevant accreditation for the organization through research and review of policies and documents
- Aid with receiving and making phone calls, emails, and other sources of communication
- Collect and track data and help with record retention
- Make copies of program materials
- Aid Office Manager with event planning
- Assist interested youth and community partners in learning more about OEC
- Other tasks as time permits

Skills and Qualifications:

- Proficiency or ability to quickly adapt to: Microsoft Office Suite, Google Suite of applications, database software
- Proficiency or ability to quickly adapt to: copy machines, scanners, conducting mail merges, etc.
- High level of communication skill and teamwork with staff and participants of diverse backgrounds and skill sets
- Strong attention for detail and to see through completion of tasks
- Experience working in an office environment
- Ability to work independently
- Be comfortable with training and instructing teams
- Ability to manage time effectively
- Think creatively and incorporate diverse ideas into projects
- Sense of humor, spirit of adventure and desire to make a positive difference in our community

Status: Part time 15- 25 hours/week

Application Deadline: January 15, 2020

To Apply

Visit www.onondagaeearthcorps.org/jobs to apply online or to download the application. You will find this position posting on our website under "staff positions."



Finger Lakes Land Trust Restoration Planting

BY KAT KORBA

The Finger Lakes Land Trust partnered with the Onondaga Earth Corps, White Oak Nursery, and Borotek, to restore the ecology of buffer zone on property in Marietta, NY, by diversifying the land with native trees and shrubs. The project is funded by NY Department of Environmental Conservation and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The site will eventually become a public access park in the future.



Crewmember Terrance Valdes, and crewleaders Sarah Welz, Amanda Cruty, and Rehgan Machold celebrating after a long day of restoration planting.

OEC natural areas staff and crew planted 280 native shrubs including: spice bush, nannyberry, buttonbush, red twig dogwood, silky dogwood, choke cherry, black elderberry, winterberry, witch hazel, bayberry and arrowwood viburnum. White Oak Nursery planted approximately 365 native trees including: swamp white oak, sycamore, shellbark hickory, black gum, American hornbeam, bitternut hickory, tulip tree, black cherry, yellow birch, hackberry, red oak, bur oak, white pine, basswood, and sugar maple. Trees and shrubs were planted with a weed mat. Trees were surrounded by a wire cage and shrubs were planted with deer-resistance granules.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust will maintain responsibility for monitoring the condition of the trees and shrubs and removing the wire cages of the tree plantings when appropriate.



*"Trees help us breathe
With their leaves, as they grow,*

When they weave and they lean, as they stay and as they go

Sometimes they stink and sometimes they're weak, all they need is some love

And they'll be sure to take care of us from the beams up above."

-ROCKETT, LARELL

Youth crewmember

Fall youth crew posing with one of many trees they planted this season.

Fall Youth Voices

Participants of the Fall program took time to reflect on their experiences at OEC. The following statements express some of those experiences. (Read more statements on page 6)

My experience with Onondaga Earth Corps has been great. I wanted to try to learn new experiences and get outdoors more. I also wanted to stay active while doing something that I like. When we plant trees it's a team method we build in the process, we work together as one with communication but there are some things that are upsetting to me. I don't like having rocky soil because it makes it more difficult. It's hard having to work around rocks and dry soil and also having to pickaxe could be a workout for some. Working on the job helps me think more and gives me options on what I would like to do next in my life because on Friday we have personal development day which usually we have group discussion, where we can talk about our future.

I've been working on other applications for other jobs so I wouldn't go through the winter without a job. Working for Onondaga Earth Corps helped me get into ONPOINT for college and that will help me proceed with my career. Also, with Earth Corps on my side, I feel that I can apply to college for Mechanical Engineering and Business Management.

-BATES, NAKIR

Young Adult crewmember



Crewmember Nakir Bates swinging from a harness and ropes at the Orenda Springs ropes course in Marcellus, NY.



Crewmember William Spinks poses for a photo outside of the Red's Warehouse on Montgomery Street.

I had a fun experience with tree planting because I got to learn a lot about trees and I learned how to plant trees. One thing I learned about trees is that they have rings on the inside and you can tell how old they are by counting how many rings they have. One of my favorite things about planting trees is seeing the reactions from people that live on the properties. I dislike planting in the rain and being all muddy.

The first trees I got to learn about were Maple trees, they turn into a really bright vivid red color in the fall season. Linden trees have heart shaped leaves and I thought that was interesting. Mulberry trees grow berries, they have irregular shaped leaves, and they have a lifespan comparable to humans. I also learned about Tilia Americana trees (Basswood). Basswood has a height of 50 to 120 ft and they have bigger shaped leaves. Personally my favorite tree is a red maple because of the color in the fall. The color is just very vibrant and it stands out in neighborhoods.

Over the winter I plan on working and coming back to OEC in the spring season. I also want to keep contributing to my goals in personal development. With the techniques that I learned, saving has helped me a lot and that's what I would like to continue to do.

-SPINKS, WILLIAM

Young Adult crewmember

GROWING TREES, YOUTH & COMMUNITY WITH STR

BY GREG MICHEL

Eight years ago, OEC embarked on a journey with Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse to plant 8500 trees as part of the award winning Save the Rain Program (STR) which combines green and grey infrastructure to prevent combined sewer overflows into Onondaga Lake. This effort marked the beginning of OEC scaling up to meet the demand for large scale tree planting and for more youth opportunities for meaningful employment and civic engagement.

It took OEC the first 7 years of our program to plant 700 trees. In our 8th year, we planted 750 with STR. Since 2014, youth and young adults have been planting approximately 1000 trees per year. They have also spoken to each property owner about each of the trees that we plant and conducted follow-up maintenance. After 8 years, OEC put the final tree of this large scale planting operation in the ground on November 10th (Read It takes a village to plant a tree - especially during COVID on page 7 to see how this turned out).

As a result of OEC's involvement with this large scale planting work, 57 youth and young adults were employed by project work which also leveraged the additional employment of another 336 youth. Some of these young adults went on to lead the public outreach process for the City of Syracuse's Urban Forest Master Plan, to present at the Arbor Day Foundation's Partners in Community Forestry Conference in California, and the OEC program has been recognized nationally by American Forests for our young participants' accomplishments.

While our large scale planting as part of STR has reached the City and County's goals for getting trees in the ground to reduce stormwater runoff, we will continue planting, just not at the same scale and we will be very engaged in taking care of all of these new trees. We are also very excited that new targets have been set as part of the ReLeaf Syracuse - Urban Forestry Master Plan to continue working with the community on increasing tree cover to improve our health, protect our water and improve quality of life.

Thank you to all that have been a part of this journey!



2013 crewmember, Tyrone Canon, stands next to a tree he planted 8 years prior with one of the last trees to be planted in 2020.

Fall Youth Voices

(continued from page 4)



Young adult crewmember Carveion Wright looking down from a tree he had climbed during a safety course offered by National Grid and Nelson Tree Services.

Working with OEC has been very fun and fruitful for me in a lot of ways and being apart of the tree crew has been pretty fun to do. I get to make a couple of digging jokes when we are shoveling. I get to meet new people every now and again. I understand my coworkers a little bit more each day. That right there, I think, is pretty fun to do. Of course working here has its bad things too, like post pounding gets hard to do because it is a little heavy. Combining a heavy post pounder with bad weather makes tree planting harder than it should be, but that's part of the job.

For the most part, I love what I do and I can't think of a better place to be at the moment. That's why I'm sad that it is only seasonal work. During the winter, I do plan to work on my license to move forward with becoming a police officer, and while I do that, I will be working somewhere else for the time being. I hope to return back to working with Onondaga Earth Corps during the springtime next year.

-WRIGHT, CARVEION

Young Adult crewmember

ABC's of Structural Pruning

by Jahkella Holmes-Porch

Pruning is nice, simple, and has a good looking outcome. Start by removing crossing branches and branches that grow back towards the center of the tree. Shape young trees, but don't cut back the leader. As young trees grow, remove lower branches to raise it, and remove branches that are too closely spaced on the trunk. Then remove large branches, leaves, and stubs that can cause health problems for the tree. If these tree health hazards are not removed, it can destroy the tree's natural shape, promote the growth of suckers, and create weak branches.

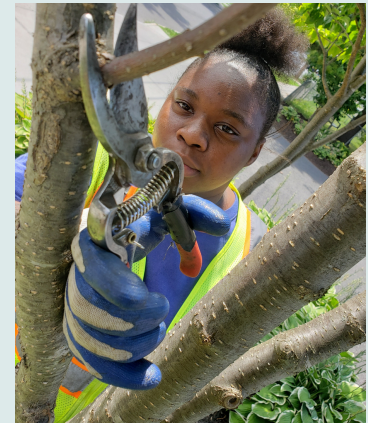
A good pair of pruning shears is probably one of the most important tools for cuts up to 3/4 inches might be made with. Hand saws are very important for cutting branches over 1 inch. Pole saws allow for extended reach with a long handle, but they must be used carefully as it is difficult to achieve clean cuts with them. When using a pole saws make sure your angles are correct before making your cut.



Tay Stenson trains crew and staff members how to properly prune street trees and maintain the tools needed for the job.



OEC staff Meqdad Ali and young adult crewmember Terrance Valdes assess a tree before pruning.



Advanced young adult crewmember Jahkella Holmes-Porch ready to make a pruning cut.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO PLANT A TREE - ESPECIALLY DURING COVID

BY HALEY O'BRIEN

This year was truly unprecedented, with Covid-19 impacting our every move. We were regularly understaffed due to social distancing measures; this posed a particular challenge while attempting to keep up with the rigorous demands of the fall season, our busiest of the year. In spite of our best efforts and adaptability, late October brought a few hundred trees to our doors and an extremely reduced staff left to plant them. We were frankly un-sure how to accomplish this seemingly impossible task.

Fortunately, we are in good company—we were able to rally support from a plethora of supporters, ranging from former staff and crew members to board members, tree nursery partners, partnering contractors and local community enthusiasts. With a bit of luck and a lot of support, we were able to achieve our goal of planting 300 trees for the season, concluding our last large-scale tree planting for the county's Save the Rain Program. We would like to give special thanks to John Stella, Megan Quinn, Joe Cobb, Dave Ryan, and Ioane Etuale for their help during this trying season—we could not have done this without each one of you.

Seeing so many people come together to support our organization was truly heartwarm-ing. OEC has clearly had a positive impact on many, and especially during these trying times, we do not take that lightly. As said by Board Member and SUNY-ESF Professor John Stella, "OEC's impact as peer educators extends beyond Syracuse's residents and youth, but also to university students who will use this knowledge in their careers beyond ESF and Syracuse." Echoing similar sentiments of gratitude, fellow Board Member Megan Quinn reflected, "One of the trees we planted was at a home where a loved one was recently lost, and the family seemed grateful to have a tree planted as a way to remember them."

While this season required a great deal of creativity, these moments of difficulty are often the most gratifying of all.

We are beyond grateful for all of the support we have from our wide-reaching network and especially proud to do work that is meaningful to our community. Thank you all again for your support over the years, and we hope you enjoy your new trees!



Joe Cobb (right) teaches student volunteers how to plant.

*"Think like a tree
Soak up the sun
Affirm life's magic
Be graceful in the wind
Stand tall after a storm
Feel refreshed after it rains
Grow strong without notice
Be prepared for each season
Provide shelter to strangers
Hang tough through a cold spell
Emerge renewed at first signs of spring
Stay deeply rooted while reaching for the sky*

*Be still long enough to
Hear your own leaves rustling"*

-KAREN I. SHRAGG

*"Trees keeps life lines going
Giving off an abundance of oxygen*

*Trees are our future
A tree is nature's beauty
Trees clean our water
Trees are our shields
They absorb harmful things
They provide greenery
and peace"*

-THOMAS, CAM'RON

Youth crewmember

Working During a Pandemic

BY BEATRIZ GURGOL

This year with covid has been very hard for all of us. OEC has handled the situation very well. They have rules to help us stay safe in these hard times. We split our group into different cars to maintain social distancing, we have to wear masks, we clean the main building when needed. I can tell everyone there cares about the health of others. No one complains about the masks even when we have to wear them outside while planting. We all keep distance and respect each other if they get uncomfortable. We even take temperatures everyday.

I'm thankful for these guidelines because I love working here at Onondaga Earth Corps. It's a lot of fun working outside and giving back to the community only by planting. It's fun doing community outreach with my other crew members and giving information about the creekwalk and what OEC is all about. I'm happy that people are listening to us because it is very important. Maybe if they see how hard we work they will do something as small as stopping littering. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to make sure the youth had a season this year.



Artwork by Huda Ali, Youth crewmember.

Graduation Article

BY JESSICA ALIGHIERI



Crew and staff members gather around a bonfire for OEC's Fall graduation day.

Challenges can come in many forms and provide many opportunities for growth and development. This year was no short order in opportunities for growth, both as individuals and as a society, we are seeing it happen all in real time. One of the bright spots for Onondaga Earth Corps was connecting, supporting, and having the privilege of watching this year's OEC crew members take the opportunities and make them into reality. We had 10, wonderful young adults join the OEC team this year hoping to find and build some sense of normalcy and to seize an opportunity to learn something new.

On November 20, 2020 OEC staff and crew gathered round a bonfire pit sharing stories, favorite memories, and a hearty meal for the last time this year. We laughed, shared encouraging thoughts on how each of us have grown, what we will miss in each other, and talked about crew member's goals for the winter months. It is important for all of us to celebrate even the smallest of accomplishments, though the accomplishments of this crew were anything but. Crew members fought the unknown of the pandemic that has brought the globe to a halt, they have battled changing demands in childcare, uncertainty in their own lives, and all the while, showed up everyday with hope and courage, supporting themselves and each other to grow and learn. Every person who walks through our doors is courageous, strong, and determined. We are proud of our graduating crew members, and wish them nothing short of the absolute best.

ABOUT THE ONONDAGA EARTH CORPS

When the Eli MacDonald Green Team was restructured in 2005 as the Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) for local communities, OEC was formed to:

- Help youth understand the relationship between people and the urban ecosystem
- Engage youth in hands-on community and environmental 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:

For more information on the donation options listed below, please visit: www.onodagaeearthcorps.org/donate

Amazon Smile

Use smile.amazon.com when making amazon purchases, and select Onondaga Earth Corps as your current charity.

Fund-A-Truck

Donate towards our fleet vehicles. Fund-A-Truck goal: \$50,000

Bottle Bonanza!

Redeem your returnable bottles and cans to one of our new redemption center partners: F-M Returnables, Express Bottle Return, Bottle and Can Retrieval, Papa Cans and Bottle Return. Ask them to deposit the \$ to the Onondaga Earth Corps Account.

Donate Now!

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Contact Us



www.onodagaeearthcorps.org
(315) 565- 3797
onodagaeearthcorps@gmail.com

SUNY EOC Building
100 New St. Room 239
Syracuse, NY 13202