

OEC NEWSLETTER

Official publication of the Onondaga Earth Corps

Springing Into 2022!

At Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC), winters are always a time to reflect, recharge, and then reemerge in spring with energy to propel the youth and young adults in our program forward. 2022 is no exception and our team has been very busy. Since the beginning of the year, our field staff and participants have pruned trees (in the snow!) and hosted stewardship events; our administrative team visited conservation corps programs in Philadelphia and hired an amazing slate of staff members; and, for the first time in our history, OEC started running a youth program in what is typically the “off season”. After two very intense years of continual adaptation and triage, our reemergence in 2022 is very uplifting.



OEC Staff pause by the inner harbor for a photo on a sunny day during staff training.

Before the world hit pause in 2020, OEC young adults played an instrumental part in the outreach surrounding the development of the City of Syracuse’s Urban Forest Master Plan. As we reemerge, OEC young adults are back taking care of some of the over 10,000 trees planted in recent years as part of Onondaga County’s Save the Rain Program. Funds have also been allocated to help the City reach its goal of increasing canopy by 7% over the next 20 years. That’s 2,870 trees a year and OEC will be a partner in making this happen.

Before the world hit pause in 2020, OEC began setting the stage to implement large-scale natural areas restoration along the Onondaga Creekwalk at Kirk Park. Today the park is on its way to transformation, powered in part by OEC youth.

In 2019, the OEC Board of Directors identified the strategic goals of increasing the number of youth we serve and increasing year-round opportunities for our youth and young adults. As we emerge in 2022, we are piloting this effort in collaboration with CNY Works.

Lastly, we reemerge in 2022 with dynamic new board and staff members, many of whom you will meet in this newsletter. We have new staff that come to us as program graduates as well as from other conservation corps, private sector natural resource entities, and community-based service work. New Board Members hail from neighborhood partner organizations, landscape professional partners, and education and workforce development partners (stay tuned for introductions in our next newsletter!).

We look forward to seeing you outdoors with our crews at any of a number of service opportunities this spring as we reemerge together.

Sincerely,

GREGORY MICHEL, EXEC. DIRECTOR

Upcoming Events

REGISTER FOR EVENTS AT:
bit.ly/OECevents

Party 4 the Planet
Apr. 23, 11A- 3:30P
Rosamond Gifford Zoo
1 Conservation Pl, Syracuse, NY 13204

Northeast Community Center Re-Opening
Apr. 23, 11A- 3:30P
716 Hawley Ave, Syracuse, NY 13203

Syracuse Grows Resource Drive
Apr. 23, 9A- 3P
Various Locations
www.syracusegrows.org

Schiller Park Clean Up
Apr. 23, 10A- 12P
Schiller Park Rd, Syracuse, NY 13203

Feldmeier Tree Planting
Apr. 30, 10A- 12:30P
6715 Robert Feldmeier Parkway

Past Events

Tree Pruning with OEC and ESF
Mar 26, 10A- 1P
Comstock Ave & Euclid Ave

Pancakes for All Recognition Breakfast
Mar 19, 10A-1P
136 Dr. MLK W, Syracuse, NY 13205

Community Tree Pruning
Feb 3, 10:45A- 12P
Seals Community Center at Kirk Park

Thank you to our Sponsors

Landscapes East
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Syracuse University
Rare Earth Nursery
Sauve Brothers Body Shop

Ring in the New Season- Greetings from Onondaga Earth Corps Staff



**LOGAN REIDSMA
(FOREMAN)**

Hi all, my name is Logan Reidsma and I recently began my position as Foreman with Onondaga Earth Corps at the beginning of April 2022. Prior to arriving at OEC, I worked with National Grid as a contractor responsible for managing outreach and communication efforts with stakeholders in support of utility projects in Upstate New York. I am extremely excited to transition into the role as OEC's Foreman as it will allow me to give back to the greater Syracuse community while merging my skillsets in communication and community engagement with my interests in connecting people with outdoor spaces and urban forestry.

My first week with OEC was exciting and fast paced and I hit the ground running. The past week I pruned young trees on Syracuse's Northside and started spring maintenance activities including trash removal and cutting back vegetation at multiple green infrastructure sites in the City of Syracuse.



I have learned a lot in the short time since I've started and I am excited to continue growing as a person here at OEC. With the spring season right around the corner, staff are prepping for a busy next few months with tree planting events and ongoing green infrastructure work, all of which I am excited to be a part of.



**JAY PORCH
(CREW LEADER)**

My name is Jay Porch. I started at OEC in 2019 as a YA and now I am a crew leader at OEC. When I first started, I didn't really know what I liked and didn't like. I ended up loving being outdoors and engaging in the community. My first impression of OEC was impressed with how OEC takes the time to help you figure out what your goals are and helps you get to that goal to the best of their ability. What I'm most excited about for the spring season are the community events. I'm also excited about leading a crew and getting to know them because there is a lot they can learn from me and a lot I can learn from them.



Ringling in the New Season (continued)



GARRETT BOLAND
(CREW LEADER)

Hello! My name is Garrett Boland, and I am a Green Infrastructure Crew Leader at OEC. Before OEC, I worked on trail crews across the US, and was a supervisor for a NYS trail crew in the Adirondacks. I started out at OEC as a young adult crew leader in the spring of 2021, and did natural areas projects mostly along the Creekwalk in Kirk Park, but I also planted trees all over the city and did green infrastructure and urban forestry when needed. In the fall, I was one of two youth crew leaders two afternoons a week while I attended graduate school at SUNY ESF, and led them on further natural areas projects along the Creekwalk at Kirk and on tree plantings across Syracuse. Now that I am doing Green Infrastructure, I am looking forward to honing my plant identification skills and improving the aesthetics of our city streets. I'm excited to work with the young adults again and hope to apply what I've been learning at SUNY ESF to our work at Onondaga Earth Corps!



TYRELL BURKE
(CREW LEADER)

My name is Tyrell Burke and I am one of the new crew leaders that will be starting the Spring 2022 season with the Onondaga Earth Corps. After first being introduced to the OEC, I decided to first take a glance at the website and was taken aback by what I saw. I was not only impressed by the saturation of young Black and Brown faces, but by the seemingly total inclusion and diversity amongst the organization as a whole. As I continued to peruse the website, I started noticing some of the same faces in different time frames which signaled to me there was nice retention and development with the organization which intrigued me further. It gave me memories of my beginnings into community work in Alabama with the grass-roots approach to its programming within communities and also my work with various organizations in the Syracuse area that promoted and benefited greatly from the diversity of its staff and volunteers while keeping inclusion a priority. While I am overly excited to reconnect with and serve my community again, I am also anxious to learn more about urban forestry and how we can improve our balance between man and nature.



Ringing in the New Season (continued)



KATE ABEL
(PROGRAM COORDINATOR)

Greetings! My name is Kate Abel (She/her/hers) and I am the new Program Coordinator for Onondaga Earth Corps. I am from Tallahassee, Florida and graduated from Florida State University where I got my degree in Environmental Studies in 2017. Since then, I've worked and lived on both the East and West Coast doing all sorts of hands-on conservation work with federal and state agencies. Living on and working to restore lands that I otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to see has been a life changing adventure.



Most recently, I was a Project Leader for Excelsior Conservation Corps in the Finger Lakes Region of New York. When I relocated to Syracuse at the end of 2021, I was quickly searching for an avenue to connect to my community in an intentional way. When I came across OEC's website, I knew I wanted to be a part of an organization that was walking the walk in line with their mission. Engaging young people in hands-on stewardship of the neighborhoods we live, play, work, and exist in will always be time well spent. I am excited for the Spring 2022 season to kick off, all of the upcoming community events, and learning how to identify trees from across a field like some OEC staff can!



MEGAN GORSS
(ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT)

Howdy folks! I'm the new Administrative Assistant, Megan (she/they). I moved to Syracuse in 2014 when I enrolled at SUNY ESF as a first year student. One switched major and multiple failed classes later, I graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Natural Resources Management in the winter of 2021. I came on with OEC shortly thereafter. Most of the work I do with OEC focuses on data collection or social media outreach (Tree Tuesday posts have been some of my favorite projects). I have another job as a rock climbing facilitator/instructor where I delight in connecting people with new recreational challenges. In my free time I snuggle with my stinky, sassy old cat, mend my tattered or oversized clothes, play board games with my loved ones, cook very poorly, and get outside to admire the trees.



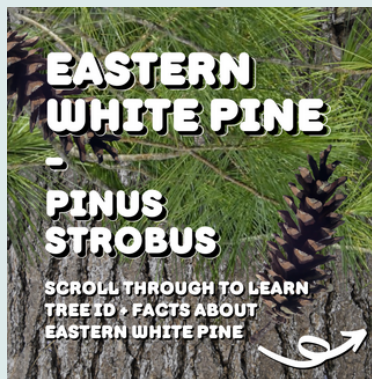
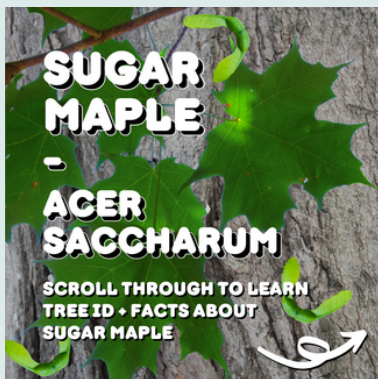
Tree Tuesdays and Donations

BY MEGAN GORSS

Spring is in the air and we are gearing up for our field season here at OEC headquarters! We have over a half dozen community events in the works, approximately 230 trees slated to be planted, and a crew of Young Adults just about ready to get their hands dirty. We're excited to get to work!

In other news, our old social media tradition of Tree Tuesdays has been resurrected with a new twist: focusing on trees you can find locally. If you've enjoyed a Tree Tuesday post, support our conservation work, or believe in the young people that drive OEC, there are a few different ways you can support us. We're always looking for community support in the form of volunteers, event participants, and donors.

We are grateful for and appreciate all types of donations whether you give directly via Paypal or Venmo (@EarthCorps), buy a gift off our Amazon Wishlist, direct your recycling returnables our way, or shop on Amazon Smile. Visit our website for more details and thank you for thinking of us - we look forward to seeing you at our next event!



Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service

BY KATE LITTLEFIELD

Onondaga Earth Corps is driven to create positive change in the community and environment. No one embodies this guiding principle more than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In honor of Martin Luther King Day, OEC held a pruning workshop to teach community members how to prune trees properly while working on some of the young trees around Kirk Park. Tree pruning not only creates a stable growth form for the trees, but it allows us to enjoy and experience our green spaces in different ways as well as beautify our neighborhoods. Even though the weather was working against us on both the original service date of Martin Luther King day, and the rescheduled date on February 3rd, OEC persevered with positivity and hot cocoa!

We were able to prune 8 trees and instruct some fellow environmental enthusiasts on tree identification, pruning techniques and correct pruning methods. The work ranged from road and pedestrian visibility clearance to thinning and promoting proper form for future growth. Despite the cold day, People were happy to collaborate with others and see how their work made a positive impact on the trees and the park's look overall.



OEC Staff, Yvonne Chu, learning about proper pruning cuts at the MLK Day of service event.

OEC Offers Workforce Advancement Opportunities

BY TAY STENSON

We have recently run our pre-hiring training WAO (Workforce Advancement Opportunity) formerly known as CPLD. This training is an annual week long training provided to help enhance our connection and efforts in building relationships with Young Adults who are interested in onsite job training. Attendance of WAO is a requirement for those between the ages of 19-25 who are interested in working for us as a Young Adult Crewmember. However we welcome all who may just want to join for training purposes only.

This year we offered a host of certified trainings (First Aid/CPR, Erosion & Sediment Control, and OSHA 10), along with a site tour lead by Amy Samuels from the Onondaga Environmental Institute and a job panel discussion with panelists Chris Montgomery from Syracuse Build and Deka Dancil from The Urban Jobs Task Force and St. Joseph's. We had 10 participants during the week, 5 who have recently started working with us for our spring season. We are excited for the season's bloom as winter snow melts and uncovers rewarding work for us to do! Just a heads up, we will be hosting a second run of WAO, welcoming Young Adults to our Summer Season (June/July 2022) Please be on the lookout for that announcement as it will be released very soon.



WAO participants tour the Center of Excellence with Amy Samuels from the Onondaga Environmental Institute.

Tree Care Workshop with ESF Students

BY KATE LITTLEFIELD

Onondaga Earth Corps plays an important role in training environmentally passionate people and curious community members in urban forestry and ecology, outreach and maintenance. On March 26th, we held a pruning workshop for SUNY ESF students to teach them what a typical day in Urban forestry management looks like. We showed them how we locate the trees, how we set up safe working spaces and how we determine what work needs to be done on each tree.



Exec. Dir. Greg Michel talks with ESF Student Volunteers about tree shape before making pruning cuts.



OEC Staff Kate Abel explains to ESF Student Volunteers how to make cuts using a pole pruner.

ESF students were instructed in proper pruning approaches and methods in order to promote rapid recovery and proper growth form for each tree. We addressed topics such as road and sidewalk clearance, removing dead, damaged and diseased branches to promote tree health, and how to prune for proper form to reduce chances of failure in the future. We pruned a total of 25 trees in the University area and hopefully planted the seed of continued environmental stewardship through arboriculture along the way. The students were interested and seemed to really enjoy the training and time outside. We hope that this interest carries through to any of their future endeavors.

Winter Tree Pruning

BY EH MOEMO QUI

During the winter season (November 2021- March 2022), the Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) organized and directed a tree pruning project in the Syracuse City Area. The team consisted of four crew members: one crew leader, Eh Moemo Qui; an advanced young adult, Terrance Castro-Valdes, and two Americorps service members, Elizabeth Gostev and Tigist Getahun. To achieve the timely goal of the health and safety of approximately 608 targeted trees in the area, Syracuse City's Arborist, Stephen Harris, provided an extensive pruning list of targeted species.



OEC Staff and crew observe a tree before making pruning cuts.

Accomplishing this came with many challenges, knowledge enrichment, and new perspectives. It was an opportunity to lead and problem solve the issues that were inherently present. We were often faced with the uncertainty and harshness of winter: snow, icy roads, frigid winds, and low temperatures of below 25°F that made it difficult. However, it also provided the opportunity to seek other tactics that would be effective to properly prune trees during such weather. On average, our team strategically pruned approximately twelve trees per day, but increased to eighteen when the weather was more favorable. Pruning in the winter gives the trees a chance to spring to life fuller during the warmer months until the following winter. The clear view of the trees without leaves made it easier to see what adjustments needed to be made.

Besides working on tree related skills, we strengthened our bond as a crew. We learned about each other and worked out various disagreements. This helped bolster our strength as a team and perform our job more efficiently. There were times we had to take breaks or halt work for the day because of the weather conditions. However, we returned the next day or two to complete the task. The weather may have slowed us down at times, but it could never stop the OEC team from performing.

Pruning during this winter season allowed me to bloom into a better communicator and leader. I had to take the initiative and show enthusiasm. I enjoyed learning from a first hand experience and piqued an interest in learning more about the benefits of pruning on the urban environment. I learned to be more patient, an active listener, unlearn and relearn, be respectful of others' perceptions, and adapt to different conditions.



Crew leader Eh Moemo Qui uses a hand pruner to cut small diameter branches from a tree.



Volunteers organize and host a bottle bonanza fundraiser by distributing flyers and collecting bottles in Fayetteville, NY.

A Vision for Volunteers

BY YVONNE CHU

Over the years OEC has called for volunteers to aid with community events such as tree planting, fundraisers, and community clean ups. As time moves on and OEC continues to grow as an organization, there has been a greater need for volunteer service. In the month of February, Two meetings were hosted on the topic of volunteer development which resulted in the creation of the following vision statement:

The purpose of volunteer engagement at OEC is to amplify the mission of the organization by fulfilling needs-based work in partnership with a broad and diverse community of supporters who embrace a spirit of service.

This vision statement helps guide how we engage with volunteers moving forward. OEC has an open call for volunteers to serve by making contributions by way of ideas, time, energy, decision making, and planning. If you have interest in volunteering with OEC at any level, please complete a volunteer interest form on our website at

<https://onondagaeearthcorps.org/join-oec/volunteer/>

DONATE

For more information, visit www.onondagaeearthcorps.org/donate

Amazon Smile

Use smile.amazon.com when making Amazon purchases & select Onondaga Earth Corps as your charity.

Fund-A-Truck

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

Bottle Bonanza

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



@EarthCorps



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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

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