



SPRING 2018

At OEC this spring, everyone has been busy at work beautifying our neighborhoods as warmer weather approaches. We've worked with returning members of our crews, welcomed many new ones, engaged lots of volunteers in our events, and are excited to continue fulfilling our goals! Don't miss the chance to catch up with all of the good times OEC has had this season on our [Facebook page!](#)



Follow us on social media to find out about all of our cool volunteer events this summer!



Welcome to Spring!

BY KELLY WISE

Spring in Syracuse is such a welcome sight and a delight. Everywhere I look things are becoming new. Many things are new at OEC as well. We have new crew leaders Matt and Ben as well as our six young adults and myself. This first spring as the Tree Program Coordinator has been exhilarating. We all started a week before the crew arrived and jumped right into trees, mulch and compost.

Although I have planted hundreds of trees in my life, these 200 trees we planted this spring for the Save the Rain Program have been life changing and affirming. Planting trees in the inner city is like giving a gift to the future. I see each tree as an oppor-

tunity to grow, bloom and bear fruit, not just for the tree but also for the young people in the OEC program.

Many of the trees we plant will struggle to grow in the harshness of the city near the street and some will thrive in the rich soil of city parks. Each needs to be planted correctly, nourished with compost and water and staked to stand tall against whatever winds may blow against them. Teaching our young adult crew to plant trees for the first time gave me such hope for our city and for them. Each one has had a hard time growing up in the city and OEC is like the stakes that hold them straight. Like young trees these young people need our support as they are hard-

-working and deserving.

During our first community planting in Upper Onondaga Park I was moved by the thought that the row of tulip trees we planted overlooking our city will someday be a glorious site. I couldn't help but be thankful for those who came before who planted the massive trees we now enjoy in this beautiful city park. I may never live to see the majesty of these rows of trees but with hope for the future I will continue to plant, water and nurture trees and people.

My heart is blessed to think of planting hundreds more trees this fall.

Upper Onondaga Park Tree Planting

BY MATT RAY

On Saturday, May 5th, O.E.C. with the help of a small army of nearly 50 volunteers spent the day planting 39 trees in Upper Onondaga Park, in the Strathmore neighborhood. Our aim was to restore the park to its original glory by planting the same species of trees that lived there in the 1920s. 4 sugar maples, 5 red maples, 5 northern red oaks, 10 American lindens, 9 tulip poplars, and 6 American sweet-gums was the medley of hardwoods planted. Native to the area, these species of trees will not only safely contribute to the beauty of the park, but also help to retain rainwater, one of the chief goals of Syracuse's Save the Rain initiative.

Because Syracuse relies on a combined sewer system, excessive rain from a storm or flood can cause litter and waste to flow into Onondaga



Volunteers working together to plant trees at Onondaga Park

Lake. As these trees begin to mature, thousands of gallons of rainwater which otherwise would cause our sewer system to overflow will instead capture this rain, saving the lake from further pollution. Projects such as this also make it possible to keep sewage treatment plants from being built in districts such as Armory Square.

Each tree requires a specific depth, compost, mulch, stabilizing stakes and ties in order to survive the

first few years after planting. O.E.C. crew member Victor Reeder, along with Cornell Cooperative Extension's Justin Kwiatkowski led demo plantings of 2 trees before splitting off into teams. Each group of volunteers was led by an O.E.C. crew member as a guide for the healthy planting of the trees.

It was an inspiring experience indeed to see the community come together for such a great cause, with gorgeous Spring weather to boot!



OEC Snow Corps Clears the City

BY SAPTARSHI LAHIRI

Onondaga Earth Corps' winter iteration — Snow Corps received prominent news coverage last season for being a key part of the effort to improve snow safety in Syracuse.

Mayor Ben Walsh and the entire team at the City of Syracuse are committing to improving safety for pedestrians on sidewalks in our winter wonderland. Returning OEC youth helped out by shoveling sidewalks and hard to reach places, clearing a safe path for pedestrians, especially the elderly or disabled, to walk on after bad storms.

You may view the full press briefing and read more about the Snow Safety Summit on syracuse.com.



Ronnie the Raindrop with the Crunch mascot

OEC Goes to Hockey!

BY NICK GARTY

On a cold, dark night in late February, the Syracuse Crunch suffered a substantial loss to the Utica Comets. However, that same night Onondaga Earth Corps scored a powerful outreach victory by tabling at the game to raise awareness for our programs and stormwater mitigation efforts. Highlights of the night included a spectacular photo opportunity with Ronnie the Raindrop and the Crunch mascot, as well as a refreshing walk from the EOC building to the War memorial. Special thanks to our partner organization Save The Rain, which provided us with a large box of ECO-swag including Raindrop stress balls which were very popular.

OEC Youth Spend Earth Day Planting Gardens, Cleaning Community Streets

BY MATT RAY

On April 21, in celebration of this year's Earth Day, members of the Onondaga Earth Corps Youth program arrived at the Southside PEACE Center for a day of community gardening and beautification.

Charles Rivers, director of that Center and a youth leader for OEC, was the main organizer for the event. At 9 in the morning I arrived there to offer any help that he and the youth crew may need. As it happened there was more than enough work to go around! Community volunteers and OEC youth were split into three teams: front lawn flower planters, street trash pickers, and the vegetable gardeners. Quan Petteway, youth program coordinator for OEC, lead the trash pickup while I stayed on-site to help lift raised gardens, mix compost with soil, and help mentor my team on educating the children



Matt with the PEACE kids on Earth Day '18

of the community volunteers that arrived.

It was a great opportunity for our youth to gain environmental leadership skills as they helped to direct children in using shovels and wheelbarrows to complete the healthy soil beds needed to create the raised gardens. Tomatoes and cabbage were the main crops planted, and by the summer the harvest was quite the haul!

By the end of the day, the Center looked totally transformed, surrounded by clean streets and freshly planted flower and vegetable gardens. A worthy cause for this year's Earth Day, OEC staff and youth were proud to part of this event.

We hope to be part of similar efforts with our partner organizations in the future!

OEC goes to Washington for DC Corps Network Conference

BY SAPTARSHI LAHIRI



Back in February, OEC went to Washington! OEC staff including Greg Michel, Meqdad Abdul Ali, Charles Rivers and myself attended the Corps Network's annual national conference titled "The Road Ahead" in D.C.

We attended several workshops on topics related to our work in conservation and youth education, ranging from how to be better mentors to our core constituents, to designing our program content, technical and management strategies to run our programs better, and so on. In addition to work-related content, there was ample opportunity to meet and hang out with staff and crew of other Corps programs similar to ours, from around the country. Needless to say, this exciting opportunity to compare notes with fellow travelers from different backgrounds, skillsets, and different regions from all over the country was fully utilized. On the final day, we met staffers of political representatives on Capitol Hill and encouraged them to support legislation

that made our work possible. But for me, particularly inspiring was the felicitation ceremony where Corpsmembers from different regions - youths and young adults the same age as our own back home in Syracuse - were honored for their superlative work and accomplishments. It was indeed a great an inspiring note to end on as we headed home our heads abuzz with ideas and plans to implement our mission.

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 in 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.

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.onondagearthcorps.org for more details.

THE VISION

Help youth understand the relationship between people and the urban ecosystem

Engage youth in hands on community and environment service learning project

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

AS ALWAYS, THANKS TO OUR MAJOR PARTNERS:

