

OEC NEWSLETTER

Official publication of the Onondaga Earth Corps

The Big Move



Volunteers and OEC Staff prepare a rooms at 490 W. Onondaga St. by removing carpet off the wall, and get the walls ready to be painted.

For several years, the Onondaga Earth Corps has had an office inside of the SUNY Educational Opportunity Center (SUNY EOC) at 100 New St. in Syracuse, but as the years have gone by, we have outgrown our space. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will be packing boxes and moving items to our new office at 490 W. Onondaga St., Syracuse, NY.

With help from volunteers, preparations have already begun for the move: walls painted, floors swept and vacuumed, shelves installed etc. Although we are not quite at the point of having staff occupy the space, we are getting close and hope to share more details with you soon.

We are truly grateful to SUNY EOC for allowing us to occupy space inside of their building for all of these years. We would also like to thank the Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA) for the services that they have provided for our fleet and field operations. And even though we are moving, we hope to maintain a strong relationship with both SUNY EOC and SHA.

BY YVONNE CHU

Upcoming Events

Block Blitz

Fri. Sept. 15 Hosted by Home Headquarters. Get involved at: <https://www.homehq.org/block-blitz>

Charity Night Happy Hour

Mon. Sept 18, 5PM-10PM
@ Harvey's Garden 1200 E Water St.

Maxwell Park Planting

Sat. Sept. 30, 2023 9:10AM-12PM @ Maxwell Park, East Syracuse, Hosted by the OEI & OEC Register Online at: <https://MaxwellParkFallTreePlanting.eventbrite.com>

Arbor Day Planting

Thurs. Oct. 5th and 12th @ Blodgett Middle School

Earth Corps Encore

Sat. Oct. 14 5:30PM-9PM @ Gateway Center at ESF. Purchase tickets at: <https://onondagaearthcorps.org/earthcorpsencore/>

Urban Food Forest Planting. SAVE THE DATE! Sat. Oct 21, Hosted by SUFFP, City of Syracuse Parks Dept. and OEC

Community Tree Planting Event. SAVE THE DATE! Sat. Nov. 4, Hosted by OEC and the City of Syracuse Parks Dept.

Thank you to our Sponsors

Landscapes East

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Sauve Brothers Body Shop



Left to Right: John Kuiik, Abdurrazake Ayubu, Pacifique Sahiriza, Walter Walker, Ne'Shounti Powell

Motivation and Mentorship through #FRESH

BY ELIAD KANE

Throughout the summer season of 2023, the 15 crew members involved in the youth program went through a series of motivational and life mentorship sessions known as #FRESH. For the entire first week, followed by bi-weekly sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the youth in our program participated in this #FRESH program that was put on by Mercy Works and facilitated by Walter Walker III.

The three main topics that Walter covered were, what he referred to as financial fitness, physical fitness, and mental fitness. Included under these broader topics were discussions that covered things like budgeting, "Telling your money where to go before you wonder where it went.", workout and diet plans to help gain or lose weight, and things to improve your mental wellbeing like having self-awareness, a vision for your life, and healthy practices like meditation and routine. Additionally, the #FRESH program had a few guest speakers that came to share their stories and offer advice to the youth. For the guest speakers, we had Mr. Twan Gyder, Coach Tae Baker, and Mr. George Lynch, each of them supplying the youth with personalized information and advice. Overall, the crew members were subject to a plethora of useful life tips across a wide range of topics and were hopefully able to take these lessons to heart and implement them into their own lives.

My Journey as a Raindrop

I am a raindrop traveling through Syracuse. As I fall down, the air is muggy and the streets become very wet from the other raindrops. I see a woman with an umbrella running across the street trying to find shelter. I hear the other raindrops hitting the sidewalk and the sound of thunder in the distance, shaking the Earth. I feel a strong connection to the earth and the other raindrops around me. This is my journey as a raindrop in Syracuse, and it was pretty fun.

BY OMARIAN LEROUX (YOUNG ADULT CREWMEMBER)



Regeneration and Youth Leadership at OEC's Board of Directors

BY GREG MICHEL

In July, longtime and 501 (c) (3) establishing board members, Ann Kornbluth, Amy Samuels, John Stella, and Christine Sauve all completed their maximum terms of service to the board. The organization is forever indebted to this team that helped move the organization from a fiscally sponsored start-up with only one full-time staff member to a nationally accredited conservation corps program with 7 full-time staff serving over 50 youth and young adults per year.

While we will miss them at our board meetings, we look forward to their continued support and advocacy in whatever shapes it will take.

As OEC turns 20, it is also appropriate that we continue to grow and regenerate the Board of Directors. As some of our senior members step down, we are excited to welcome new members, Andrew Maxwell and Josh Turnquest.



Board members meet at the location of OEC's new office at 490 W. Onondaga Building for the first time.



Group photo of the crew that helped to clean up Ward Bakery at the start of the event.

Ward Bakery Clean Up

BY TAY STENSON

OEC teamed up with City Parks for a clean up project on the Near Westside, at Ward Bakery Park and Orchard (231-33 Shonnard St. Syracuse, NY 13204). The objective was to provide an open view into the park from the street side and to simply beautify this underutilized park. We were able to prune 41 trees and cleaned up an overgrown rain garden, saving a dogwood and a mulberry tree from continuing to be overgrown by bindweed. We would love to see residents utilize Ward Bakery more for fun family activities, especially with the orchard that consists of apple and peach trees. Thank you to City Parks, Volunteers, our AmeriCorps and Kirk Park Youth members for putting in your hard work!



Crewmembers fill wheelbarrows of weeds to be discarded.



Talking to a Flower

If I was talking to a flower that I was about to plant, I would tell it how excited I am to watch it grow. I would encourage it to soak up the sunshine, feel the gentle rain, and sway with the breeze. I would promise to take care of it, providing nourishment and protection. Together, we would create a beautiful bond, blossoming into a vibrant and blooming friendship.

BY ADRIAN REID (YOUNG ADULT CREWMEMBER)

Summer Banquet

BY TAY STENSON

On August 17th, we had our annual end of season Summer banquet held at Mercy Works Vision Center. Our Youth and Young Adult Crews comprised video presentations to display their hard work and accomplishments over the Summer to everyone, including their families and friends. It was awesome to watch the shy turtles come out of their shell, I am proud of the creativity that they used when putting together their videos! It is crazy to think that our Summer season has already come to an end and that we will soon be gearing up for the Fall fun. Thank you to all of the members and Staff, our guests that were able to attend, Mercy Works for hosting us another year and to Mr. Biggs for catering our event again! We wish the best to our members, good luck on your journeys, enjoy the rest of your Summer.

My ReLeaf Conference Experience

BY EUPHORIA DOBBS

At ReLeaf, I attended different meetings facilitated by people passionate about trees discussing a variety of work they are doing with their organizations. An example being the tree diaper which helps water trees in increments even when there are droughts. Food the first day was not the greatest, it was bland and tasteless as well as the breakfast on the first morning (egg whites with tomatoes and avocado toast). The food on the last day was great and had more variety (falafel, veggie sandwiches, etc.) I expected the conference to be just meetings that dragged on, but I actually enjoyed myself! The trip to the Botanical Gardens was beautiful, getting to see the different plants as well as the garden having their own beehives was interesting to see. The high of the trip was going to the beach and seeing the ocean since I have never been. The other attendees, OEC members and I walked to the shoreline to take a swim in the ocean! Even though the ocean stole my purple sunglasses, it was still one of my favorite moments. I learned how to plant a tree, how much space a tree needs to grow when in an urban city environment, how city trees are stressed mostly in urban areas, and how to introduce myself to new people and make new connections! I met with people that worked in and planted trees in the New York City parks, and met older women that were from Long Island who have been working in the industry for years and peers such as myself that were just starting out in this field. Conferences like this are important for communities and organizations that work in similar fields because they can bounce ideas off each other and meet like-minded people. The conference could be improved by having a bigger variety of foods so that everyone is satisfied with their meal, other than that I enjoyed the location, the people, and the presentations!



Attendees at the NYSUFC ReLeaf Conference in Long Island, NY. Left to right: Euphoria Dobbs, Neil Adams, Emmanuel Atari, and Michael Wolfe

Summer Trails Training

BY AMY BURKE

In July Kimbob Frederick of Chinook Associates Trail Consulting trained Onondaga Earth Corps adult crew members and staff on trail building. This training prepared us for creating and maintaining trails in some of the parks and natural areas that we work in. Appropriate planning included measuring slope, safe tool usage, familiarization with leadership roles and body mechanics to reduce fatigue while performing physically laborious tasks. The crews and staff improved a trail off of lower Schiller Park Drive using pulaskis, pick mattocks, rock bars and rakes while paying attention to trail components like tread area, hinge point and cross slope. In Elmwood Park, water bars and check dams were installed to help direct water that might otherwise lead to erosion or negatively impact an existing trail. Creating and caring for trails has a positive impact on our community through increasing public awareness and access to nature.



OEC crews create a sustainable trail by building a half bench trail tread. This helps prevent further erosion and promotes better runoff for water along the slope. Before- Left, After- Right.

"My time at OEC was a great experience how I found out about the company was by a fellow crew member. Under previous circumstances I felt I wasn't ready, but OEC helped me with being independent and dependable. This is my second season here and I hope to have a long journey with this organization. My favorite Green Infrastructure sites are at Water St., Leavenworth Park, and East Washington St.. My favorite weeds to pick are milkweed, wild garlic, and golden rod. Working at these sites challenged me. I was put in many learning situations and I grew from them. I thank OEC for their program and for giving me a chance to succeed and better myself."
-KYLE ROWSER (YOUNG ADULT CREWMEMBER)

"The reason why I decided to work at OEC was to make money, meet new people, and try new things. I learned new things like using tools such as the leaf blower."

-MAHLIQ COLLINS (YOUNG ADULT CREWMEMBER)



"My name is Saleh the reason why I decided to work for OEC is, honestly, because I was bored and I wanted to discover what my passion was in life and to work on self improvement. This season what I liked the most would be working alongside with my team members to get the job done. I would describe my hardest work day as one that would have bad weather for working outside. So too hot or too wet"

-SALEH MOUSSA (YOUNG ADULT CREWMEMBER)

"My friend let me know about OEC. The thing I liked the most is planting trees and working with kids. There was no hard days for me and my favorite day was when the Nelson Tree Service Company came to host a bucket truck training. My next goals are to get my driver's license and starting a business. During the program, I helped volunteers do tree maintenance and I felt good about it. One major thing that I learned was the importance of trails with Kimbob Frederick during trails training.

-TUFFIS HALLIBURTON (YOUNG ADULT CREWMEMBER)



"I decided to join Onondaga Earth Corps with the intentions of making direct difference in my community through the labor of upkeeping our green spaces in Syracuse."

-CEREZA BLOODWOOD
(AMERICORPS CREWMEMBER)

Watering Trees During Drought

BY LOGAN REIDSMA

Water is critical for people and plants and within a constantly changing environment, demands on water are being stretched all over the world. Fortunately, Upstate New York, where Onondaga Earth Corps is located, water is somewhat plentiful. However drought can present itself and can have extreme impacts. A drought is a prolonged period of abnormally low rainfall that can create a shortage of water in an area and impact the moisture of the soil. There are five drought intensity levels ranging from D0-D4 that are used to show the intensity of that drought and where it is located. New York State experiences drought typically every two to three years and these droughts are typically seasonal in nature peaking over the summer. However, portions of New York have had moderate to severe droughts during the summer of 2020, 2021, and 2022 straying away from that average timeline.

We plant a lot of trees here at OEC and those trees need some help during periods of drought. This added stress can impact a tree in a web of different ways. Death of that tree is a real concern and can be mitigated by proper watering techniques. Other ailments are possible and those might not be as immediately noticeable as the death of the tree. Insects and pathogens typically attack a tree stressed by drought. A tree's water balance might come out of line and lead to an early or less brilliant autumn color. During intense dry periods, trees may struggle to gather water and nutrients over nearby grasses. Many of these ailments can have long term consequences that are negative for a city's urban forest.



Garrett Boland waters a newly planted street tree. OEC maintains newly planted trees through a variety of maintenance activities with watering being critical through the summer.

During drought conditions, watering is important. These few tips below can help tip the balance in favor of your nearby trees.

- Water trees over grasses during drought conditions.
- Prune off dead and dying branches.
- Properly maintain mulch rings around the tree.
 - Keep the mulch about 2-3 inches away from the trunk and no volcano mulching!
- The water should be placed on the soil around the tree and not the leaves.
- A newly planted tree should receive approximately 20 gallons of water a week, or 2-5 gallons a day, during drought conditions.
- Prioritize daily watering for newly planted trees and weekly watering for established trees.
- Saturate the soil a distance out about 2/3rds the tree's height or the drip line if possible.
 - If a tree is 10 feet tall, watering should be completed within about 6-7 feet of the trunk.
- Water longer than you might think so the soil around the tree is wet to a depth of two feet or so, with an emphasis on keeping the roots moist but not constantly wet.
 - A soaker hose or a watering bag that attaches around the trunk can be useful tools.
 - Water slow and long. Watering at a slower pace over a longer time is better for the tree. It allows the water to fully saturate the soil without displacing it from force. Approximately 15 to 20 minutes is an adequate amount of time for the water to soak in
- Watch the weather and adapt your tree's watering needs based on the weather.
 - If it rains significantly, say more than an inch of water, scale back the watering as needed and monitor the drought conditions.

United Way Day of Service at the Onondaga Creekwalk

BY KATE LITTLEFIELD

August 3rd we held one of our larger summer volunteer events. We recruited partners, businesses and interested individuals to join us in a focused effort performing maintenance along the creekwalk. Working with us were:

- Creekrats
- SUFFP
- City Parks Dept
- Jubilee Homes
- Chase Design
- Bowers CPAs & Advisors
- CXtec
- The DI Group
- ICT Girls Volleyball team
- United Way
- Soul food extension
- Salt City Coffee

We started the day with introductions and project overviews as well as expressing our appreciation for help with the hard work ahead. We then held a stretch circle where multiple people had an opportunity to step outside of their comfort zone and lead stretches for the large group. We broke up into small groups and got started on the creekwalk makeover and Jubilee Homes maintenance.



Volunteers at the United Way Day of Caring event, work to clean up the creekwalk by clearing the fenceline of invasive and overgrown plants.

Nature's Embrace

BY DOMNI BLENMAN (AMERICORPS CREWMEMBER)

In the heart of nature's embrace, I find,
A tapestry of wonders, so kind.
Nature shall bloom, like flowers in spring,
To celebrate the beauty nature brings.

Beneath the azure skies, so vast,
Mountains rise, in splendor amassed.
Their peaks, like sentinels, touch the clouds,
Whispering secrets that nature allows.

In meadows adorned with vibrant blooms,
A symphony of colors, nature resumes.
Butterflies dance on the gentle breeze,
As the sun's warm rays kiss the trees.

The babbling brooks, with their soothing song,
Flow gracefully, meandering along.
They quench the thirst of all life they meet,
Nourishing the earth with waters sweet.

In forests deep, where shadows play,
Whispers of wildlife echo, as if to say,
We are but guests in this sacred domain,
Where harmony and balance forever remain.

Oh, the symphony of bird songs that fill the air,
A chorus of melodies, beyond compare.
From the lark's joyful trill to the owl's hoot,
Nature's music, so pure, takes root.

The ocean, vast and ever profound,
With waves that crash and rhythm resound.
Its salty kiss upon sandy shores,
Invites us to explore its boundless shores.

Nature's poetry, in every leaf that falls,
In every storm that thunders and calls,
From the gentlest breeze to the fiercest gale,
Each verse of nature's tale shall never fail.

So let us marvel, let us adore,
The beauty of nature forevermore.
For in its embrace, we find solace, we find peace,
A sanctuary where all worries cease.

In nature's realm, let our spirits soar,
And cherish its treasures, forevermore.
For in its wonders, we find our place,
A testament to nature's eternal grace.

United Way Day of Service at the Onondaga Creekwalk

(Continued from page 8)

BY KATE LITTLEFIELD

Although our efforts were all concentrated in one general area, we worked across a variety of project types. These ranged from rain garden maintenance and food forest plantings to invasive plant removal and tree maintenance. We set out to bring some attention back to some areas that needed a little TLC and help upkeep these spaces with the communities comfort, safety and access in mind. Overall we were able to achieve our goals with our crews going back for the rest of the day to do any remaining "mop up" work. We followed this event by focusing our Natural areas crew here to continue the momentum that this project had started. This event helped give us the leg up to make a large impact in a short amount of time and set the stage for continuing maintenance in the area.

Shout out to all of those involved in helping to maintain our greenspaces and community resources and to those that provided food to feed all the hungry folks following the work!

Rain Garden Workshop Sat. Sept 9th at 12PM at Leavenworth Park

BY DJ RICE
(AMERICORPS CREWMEMBER)

I have decided to create a rain garden workshop for my AmeriCorps Leadership Project. In the workshop I will discuss the benefits of having a rain garden, their function, and finally how to construct one. I believe this project will complete two things; it will educate the public about the benefits rain gardens provide and empower the community to create a garden of their own. I hope to have a project to showcase to future employers, and more importantly a project that can help myself give back to the Syracuse community.



A flyer for a Rain Garden Workshop. At the top, a blue cloud contains the text: "Interested in building your very own rain garden?". Below the cloud, a yellow section contains text about rain gardens: "Rain gardens promote pollinators, add beauty to your garden, and reduce flooding and soil erosion!". A green leaf graphic is on the left. In the center, there's a green box with text: "Workshop with D.J. Rice, AmeriCorps member with Onondaga Earth Corps Contact at drice03@syr.edu". To the right, a large green maple leaf graphic is partially visible. At the bottom, another green box contains details: "When: Saturday September 9th, 2023 at 12pm Where: Leavenworth Park, 212 Barker Ave, Syracuse, NY 13204 Call Onondaga Earth Corps at (315)565-3797".

Bring a few friends, buy a drink, and say cheers to the summer season.



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www.onondagaearthcorps.org/donate

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Each High 5 = one \$5.00 contribution.
Help us reach 5,000 High 5s! Make your
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Bottle Bonanza

Redeem your returnables at one of our
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Retrieval. Ask them to deposit the \$ to
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SUNY EOC Building

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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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