

GREENWICH YOUTH CONSERVATION PROJECT



2004 REPORT

PREPARED BY:

Jocelyn Ness, MSW, LCSW

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Overview

The **Greenwich Youth Conservation Project** was created in 1980 to provide two-week summer “earn and learn” experiences for 14 and 15 year-old Greenwich boys and girls. It is organized into four consecutive two-week sessions. The teenagers receive stipends for helping to help maintain and beautify Greenwich parks, preserves, and facilities. Simultaneously, we improve their environmental awareness, encourage good work habits, responsible behavior, and teach interpersonal and communication skills. Seven passenger vans driven by work site supervisors transport the teens to and from the town’s three public middle schools and to the work sites. The program also schedules speakers on environmental and youth issues. These presentations give participants additional skills and knowledge that we hope will be helpful to them in their future work and lives.

In 2004 the Project served 76 teenagers-- a maximum number due to transportation limitation. This year, we had an overwhelming number of applications from the Public Schools as well as Private Schools. 164 applications were received and just about everyone who applied was interviewed. Only a couple of applicants changed their minds at the last minute due to Summer School obligations. Obviously, filling in their spot was not a problem. There was no request to switch session or accommodate special requests. Applicants were well aware of the limitation issue and no one was willing to jeopardize their session.

The program is a public/private collaboration, sponsored by five organizations. The Greenwich Department of Parks and Recreation, The Greenwich Conservation Commission, The Greenwich Audubon Society, and Greenwich Green and Clean recommend work projects and provide technical assistance. Greenwich Green and Clean also acts as fiduciary for funds contributed to the Project by private donors. The fifth sponsor, The Greenwich Department of Social Services, assumes administrative responsibility and costs for the Project and shares expenses for three work site supervisors with the Department of Parks and Recreation. As Project originator, the Department of Social Services sees that the social and emotional development of the participants receives professional social work attention.

The **Friends of the Greenwich Youth Conservation Project**, a volunteer advisory committee to the program, is appointed by the Board of Social Services. It consists of seven to ten members, including individuals and representatives from community organizations with interest in youth and conservation. The "Friends" are responsible for raising \$18,000 that is needed for the \$225 stipend paid to each teenager, for transportation, and for tools and supplies. The Friends also help to promote the purpose and objectives of the Project within the community.

GREENWICH YOUTH CONSERVATION PROJECT

2004 Highlights

Fund raising: We received 78 contributions, 8 from first time donors, for a total of \$17,395. This is slightly below the mean of \$20,434,00 over the past 5 years.

Work Assignments: The Project was created to provide “introduction to work” experiences for teens which would also help them appreciate the effort required for maintaining and beautifying our community’s parks and facilities. In addition, the program provides cost effective labor to the Department of Parks and Recreation (P&R) whose staff make and oversee the majority of our work assignments. Most of our work involves weeding, pruning, and removal of overgrown foliage at such sites as Greenwich Point, Byram Beach, Western Greenwich Civic Center, Great Captain’s Island, Greenwich Public Schools, and Pemberwick Park. This year, with the suggestion from The Board of Social Services and assistance from Parks and Recreation specific and more long-term projects for GYCP 2004 were established. Parks and Recreation determined that Laddin’s Rock in Old Greenwich would be an appropriate site for our groups. The site had been neglected for some time and there was a considerable overgrowth of weeds. Due to concerns about lateral contamination of adjacent homes and water, Parks and Recreation was not in favor of chemical treatment. Therefore, the manual labor that GYCP could provide was ideal for the repetitive clearing that was necessary to keep the area free of weeds.

This summer, we also had the opportunity to work with the custodial staff inside the Greenwich Public Schools. We helped clean and prepare the classrooms for September. These jobs were reserved for “rainy days” since the Dorothy Hamill Ice Skating Rink, our regular “shelter” from storms and indoor work site, was being renovated.

The work is beneficial to the Town and a good experience for the teens. The results of many of the projects are highly visible (the red bridge at Laddin’s Rock), easy to share with family and friends, and excellent reminders of the value of work and the satisfaction intrinsic in achieving results. After the first 10 days we got to know the residents in the area and they told us that they could not wait to be able to take walks in the park. In fact, some residents came while we were still working and complimented the groups on doing such a great job while fighting the ticks and multiple bees’ nests. Although Laddin’s Rock was our home base for 8 weeks, a complete list of other work sites and accomplishments is included in the report.

The first GYCP session did the bulk of the work and remained exclusively at Laddin’s Rock for ten days. They worked hard to open up the park by clearing the large weeds to create a path. The other sessions had an opportunity to do at least five days of work at Laddin’s Rock and then moved on to another site. When the weeds grew back a few days later we returned for an additional day to remove the re-growth. The third and fourth sessions had the most varied work

experience because they were able to sand and paint the small bridge at Laddin's Rock. They welcomed putting down their weed whackers and loppers for a few days to paint.

Work Site Supervisors: Working in partnership with Department of Parks and Recreation employees, Bruce Spaman, Superintendent of Parks and Trees, and Bill Burgess, Parks Operations Manager, proved to be an invaluable relationship again this year. Their flexibility and enthusiasm to work with teens helped us to be very successful in communicating to the kids the importance of their work and contribution to their town. Mr. Burgess was kind enough to come at the beginning of each session to orient the children and to give them a brief historical background of Laddin's Rock. This year, the children were able to comprehend and connect with the origin and the purpose of their work through the more consistent contact with Parks and Recreation

Staff's familiarity with both program procedures and the Department of Parks and Recreation's work sites and personnel adds immeasurably to the quality of our relationship with the teenagers and to work productivity. Group cohesiveness, teen satisfaction, personal adjustment, and work productivity are largely dependent upon the abilities and effectiveness of the supervisors. Jason Foster, a teacher at Western Middle School returned to GYCP as the Lead Site Supervisor. He did a superb job with the children as well as with the two new staff, Ryan Garrigan and Nitza Pierce who are both college graduates from The University of Massachusetts. With Jason's help they were quick to learn the routines and expectations of the program.

Educational Component: The program invites speakers from several youth serving and conservation organizations to inform the teens about their purposes and services. Since there had been some concern expressed by staff and outside observers regarding the level of interest for the various topics as well as the quality of the presentations, we were more discriminating in our selection and also reduced the number of speakers. We chose the ones who had been most popular and, in our opinion, most informative in past years. This year teens and staff heard presentations from The Health Department office of HIV and AIDS Information, The Youth Division of the Police Department, Kids in Crisis (provides emergency shelter and 24 hour counseling), LMG/Youth Options (emphasizes character development and skill building for substance abuse prevention), the Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Education Center, and a Youth Probation officer from The Stamford Superior Court. In order to measure reactions related to these presentations a ten-question survey was designed for feedback from the teens and administered at the end of each session. Results are included in this report.

Youth Workers. 76 unduplicated teens participated. They worked in groups of nineteen in four consecutive two-week sessions from June 30 to August 25. In accordance with program guidelines; the participants came from a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and from most areas of Greenwich. Cumulative attendance was 735 out of a possible 760 or (96.7%) This year's program included **53/76 (70%) male and 22/76 (30%) Female.** **Nationality.** African American- **5/59 (8%),** Asian- **2/59 (3%)** Causasian-**38/59 (64%)** Hispanic- **14/59 (24%)** Please note that only 59 out of 76 participants (78%) responded to this

question. They came from the following schools. Greenwich High School **28 (37%)** Western Middle School **17 (22%)** Central Middle School **16 (21%)** Eastern Middle School **12 (16%)** and Private Schools **3 (4%)**

Our approach to both preventing and dealing with discipline problems relies heavily on clear communication and consistent enforcement of program expectations. Staff have daily meetings to discuss issues, and problems with the teens and/or work are addressed as soon as possible. We believe that these strategies help to both minimize behavior problems and provide opportunities for education and behavior modification.

This summer we had very challenging groups. We were confronted with more behavior and discipline issues than last year and more supervision and counseling were needed to guide the staff and arrive at specific and consistent approaches to issues. Interventions were both individual and in groups. The program coordinator intervened on multiple occasions to change the frequency, duration, distribution, or content of the communication interaction patterns occurring among youth and staff during work or in the vans. One incident involving two teens was very upsetting to the group. It is a perfect example of an on site intervention. Because this issue was so important we interrupted the work schedule to address this in a group format. Each teen had an opportunity to express his/her views and offer suggestions. This process, by producing a common resolution of the problem, seemed to increase the group's comfort and closeness with one another. Fortunately, this did not occur at every session. After this incident the staff was better prepared to effectively intervene at the earliest sign of a problem.

During the 2004 Project we became aware that several of our teens were dealing with serious emotional, family and school problems. Unknown to us at the beginning of the summer, a couple of our teens were involved with Juvenile Court and one was placed in temporary foster care. Two participants placed in the same session had been involved in a fight with each other at school and had been sent to court because of this incident. During his presentation to this session, a youth officer who is well known to this department, recognized the boys immediately. He told me he was shocked that were they in the same session and to hear that our experience with them had been very positive. In addition, teens who had been involved with some of the Youth Services in town were on a first name basis with the Kids in Crisis speaker. Although one would think that teens would not want to identify themselves for confidentiality purposes, they were the first ones to stand up and tell their stories. Several hours spent on multiple occasions with the speakers were cathartic and therapeutic for the teens. Many seemed to find GYCP a safe forum to divulge intimate details about their alcoholic parent and/or their own experiences with drugs, alcohol, and suicide attempts.

2004 GREENWICH YOUTH CONSERVATION PROJECT Work Sites and Accomplishments

1. **Byram Park:** Trimmed hedges and cleaned overgrowth inside and outside tennis courts.
2. **Central Middle School:** Removed strangling vines from trees all around field behind school.
3. **Christiano Field:** Removed overgrown foliage from around ball field.
4. **Cos Cob School:** Removed vines from trees and cut back overgrowth around field.
5. **Dorothy Hamill Skating Rink:** Outdoor work. Cleaned overgrowth around building
6. **Grass Island:** Pulled weeds and cleaned up garbage and trash around parking lot.
7. **Glennville Elementary School:** Assisted custodial staff. Cleaned classrooms.
8. **Great Captain's Island:** Cut back overgrown foliage.
9. **Greenwich High School:** Cut back foliage on the South side of the school to enhance water view, removed overgrown foliage around ball fields and tennis courts.
10. **Greenwich Point:** Removed vines from trees; cut back overgrown foliage from around parking lots; removed overgrowth from walking and bike paths; cut back foliage to expose view of the sound; removed overgrowth from the cages; weeded and pruned in the Holly Grove.
11. **Havemeyer Field:** Cut back overgrowth.
12. **Julian Curtis School:** Cleared back overgrown foliage around back of school.
14. **Laddin's Rock:** Clear weeds and create path. Sand and paint bridge
15. **Old Greenwich Elementary School:** Assisted custodial staff with classroom cleaning.
16. **Western Greenwich Civic Center:** Cleared overgrown foliage.
16. **Western Middle School:** Assisted custodial staff with classroom cleaning and organization.

2004 GYCP PARTICIPANT SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

This survey shows that there was a good mix of fourteen and fifteen year old participants and that similar to other years more males attended the program. Ethnic breakdown was similar to past years with a slight increase of Hispanic participants this year. An average of 81% of kids in all sessions rated the experience very beneficial or beneficial and no participants rated it below satisfactory. An average of 67% indicated that the project length was appropriate.

Most participants over all four sessions (80%) rated the supervisors to be very effective or effective. Participants in **session one** rated the speakers and the presentations overall with 42% rating them as very interesting or interesting and 47% rating them as satisfactory. The ratings for **sessions two, three, and four** were individualized (see Q4a). The participants' ratings for most beneficial presentation were as follows: (57%) Rape and Sexual Assault, (64%) Greenwich Police, (64% AIDS/ HIV, (64%) Greenwich Hospital, (44%) Youth Probation, (37%) Youth Options, and (10%) Kids in Crisis.

The participants rated the speakers in order of preference as (77%) AIDS/HIV, Youth Probation (71%), Rape and Sexual Assault (69%), Youth Probation Officer (57%), Greenwich Hospital Substance Abuse (56%), Youth Options (28.5%), and Kids in Crisis (28%).

Most participants rated the work level as satisfactory (62%) with relatively equal distribution of who considered it easy or hard. Eighty-six percent of participants indicated that they would return to GYCP. Our Behavior Scale indicated that despite the diversity of issues and varied background of the participants the supervisors believed the participants were well-behaved and scored them at a high level.

GREENWICH YOUTH CONSERVATION PROJECT

2004 Highlights Five Year Cash Flow

	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Starting Balance	10,736.00	8,571.00	5,424.00	9,252.00	10,289.00
Plus:					
Donations	17,395.00	19,713.00	24,380.00	18,760.00	21,925.00
Interest	17.00	29.00	44.00	173.00	233.00
Equal Funds Available	28,148.00	28,313.00	29,848.00	28,185.00	32,447.00
Less Outlays					
Youth Wages	16,470.00	16,829.00	16,020.00	17,886.00	18,090.00
Van Rental	Town	Town	4,304.00	4,559.00	4,648.00
Gasoline	215.00	254.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tools	176.00	126.00	0.00	0.00	61.00
Postage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
First Aid Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.00	20.00
Paper Products	0.00	18.00	0.00	28.00	18.00
Film & Processing	0.00	0.00	0.00	24.00	23.00
Food	250.00	250.00	247.00	237.00	295.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	70.00	38.00	27.00	40.00
Total Outlays	17,111.00	17,547.00	20,609.00	22,770.00	23,195.00
Equals Ending Balance	11,037.00	10,736.00	8,571.00	5,424.00	9,252.00

2004 GYCP PARTICIPANT SURVEY RESULTS

Demographics

Attendance and Survey Completion: 76 participants attended the Conservation Project but 74 (97%) completed the survey. This discrepancy is due to some participants being out sick when the survey was administered.

Ages: 14 years old (46/76) 61% 15 years old (30/76) 39%
 Forty-six or 61% of the 76 participants were 14 years of age and 30 or 39% were 15 years old.

Sex: **Male** (53/76) 70% **Female** (23/76) 30%
 Fifty-three or 70% of the 76 participants were male and 23 or 30% were female.

Nationality: **White:** 38/59 (64%) **African American:** 5/59 (8%)
Hispanic: 14/59 (24%) **Asian:** 2/59 (3%).
 59 out of the 76 participants (78%) responded to this question. Of those responses, 64% of the participants were White, 8% were African American 24% were Hispanic, and 3% were of Asian descent.

Survey Questions

1. How would you rate your experience with the Conservation Project?

Sessions

Response	S1	S2	S3	S4
VBeneficial	16%	6%	12%	53%
Beneficial	79%	72%	53%	32%
Satisfactory	5%	22%	35%	10%
Disappointing	0	0	0	0
VDisappointing	0	0	0	0
No Response				5%

2. How would you rate the length of the Conservation Project?

	S1	S2	S3	S4
VLong	0	0	0	11%
Long	11%	28%	11%	5%
Satisfactory	68%	55%	72%	74%
Short	21%	11%	11%	5%
VShort	0	0	0	0
No response		6%	6%	5%

3. How would you rate the supervisors at the Conservation Project?

	S1	S2	S3	S4
V Effective	79%	44%	22%	68%
Effective	21%	28%	33%	26%
Satisfactory	0	28%	22%	0
Ineffective	0	0	17%	5%(1)
V Ineffective	0	0	0	0
No Response			6%	

4. How would you rate the lunchtime speakers at the Conservation Project?

	S1	S2	S3	S4
V Interesting	5%			
Interesting	37%	See Q4a	See Q4a	See Q4a
Satisfactory	47%			
Dull	11%			
Very Dull	0			

4. (a) Circle your reaction to the *information* presented by the lunchtime speakers.
(Sessions 2,3,4 combined results)

Rape and Sexual Assault

Beneficial 30(57%)
Repetitive 18(35%)
Not Beneficial 4(8%)

Gr Hosp Sub Ab/Smoking

Beneficial 28(53%)
Repetitive 18(35%)
Not Beneficial 6(12%)

Youth Options

Beneficial 13(37%)
Repetitive 14(40%)
Not Beneficial 8(23%)

Gr. Police

Beneficial 31(64%)
Repetitive 12(25%)
Not Beneficial 5(10%)

Aids/HIV Dept. of Health

Beneficial 32(64%)
Repetitive 17(34%)
Not Beneficial 1(2%)

Kids in Crisis

Beneficial 3(10%)
Repetitive 15(54%)
Not Beneficial 10(36%)

Youth Probation Officer

Beneficial 21(44%)
Repetitive 23(48%)
Not Beneficial 4(8%)

4. Please rate the lunchtime *speakers'* presentations from best to worst with 1 being the best and 8 being the worst. (1-3= Best, 4-5= Average, 6-8= Worst)

E) Rape and Sexual Assault

Best 33(69%)
Average 10(21%)
Worst 5(10%)

D) Youth Options

Best 10(28.5%)
Average 15(43%)
Worst 10(28.5%)

S) Gr. Hosp. Sub Ab/ Smoking

Best 26(56%)
Average 15(33%)
Worst 5(11%)

M) Aids/HIV Dept. of Health

Best 37(77%)
Average 6(13%)
Worst 5(10%)

W) Gr. Police

Best 30(71%)
Average 4(10%)
Worst 8(19%)

L) Youth Probation Officer

Best 25(57%)
Average 11(25%)
Worst 8(18%)

J) Kids in Crisis

Best 9(28%)
Average 10(31%)
Worst 13(41%)

5. How would you rate the work at the Conservation Project?

	S1	S2	S3	S4
Very Easy	11%	0	5%	0
Easy	21%	12%	0	16%
Satisfactory	53%	70%	61%	63%
Difficult	16%	18%	23%	16%
V Difficult	0	0	6%	5%
No response			5%	

6. What did you like BEST and LEAST about the Conservation Project?

The most common responses for what participants liked **BEST** were earning money and making new friends.

The most common response for what participants liked **LEAST** was waking up early.

7. What would you have done for the past two weeks if you had not done the Conservation Project?

Most participants said they would have stayed home, watched TV and/or slept.

8. What was the most important thing you learned? (About your town, your surroundings, from the speakers?)

The most popular answers were learning about conservation and teamwork.

The participants stated that they learned the most from the HIV/Aids Dept. of Health speaker.

9. If you could have different afternoon activities (besides speakers) what would you choose?

The participants indicated they would like more physical activities such as swimming, football, softball, etc.

10. Would you return next year?

86% of participants indicated they would return next year if they were able.

Do you have any additional comments to make regarding the Conservation Project?

Most participants had no comments and the few that commented were inconsistent or irrelevant to the Project.

Behavior Survey Results

Eight behaviors were measured on a scale of 1 – 5 with 5 being the best; the average overall score for all four sessions was 4.76 out of 5. The lowest overall session score received by a single participant was 3.5 and the highest score was 5.

Measured Behaviors included arriving on time, dressing appropriately, bringing lunch, participation, listening and requesting help from staff, respecting speakers, respecting coworkers, and attitude.