



A path to a better future.

CorpsResponse

Since 1982

Fall 2008

ON THE PATH TO PREPAREDNESS

Barely one month into her training under a brand-new emergency response and community readiness program offered by Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB), AmeriCorps member Gretchen Oleson (pictured at right) and her crew were summoned into action. A heavy February rain, coupled with a high tide, posed the risk of widespread flooding around Marin County. A soggy Saturday was spent by the Corps Respond team, under the direction of CCNB Supervisor Matthew Danielczyk, who was contacted by the Marin County Department of Public Works, Flood Control and Water Conservation District to assist in efforts to protect Marin communities. Working their way from Novato to Mill Valley, the team spent the day clearing debris jams to keep runoff free-flowing through culverts.



Public land managers depend on CCNB's corpmembers for fire-fuel mitigation and flood-prevention measures.

One of seven such corps programs nationwide, Corps Respond is partly funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service and helps address the urgent need in Marin for ongoing fire-fuel reduction on public lands and for flood-prevention measures. It is also a key component of the county's preparedness and emergency response plan for both natural and human-made disasters.



Members of CCNB's Corps Respond team undergo extensive training that includes how to safely operate heavy equipment as well as power and hand tools.

A recent college graduate with a combined major in environmental studies, anthropology and zoology, Gretchen, 23, is one of six members of the Corps Respond team. Putting plans to pursue a master's degree on hold temporarily, she was looking for an outdoor service and learning experience. "In school, I learned about the environment and conservation techniques in theory," she says. "Now I have the opportunity to do it, and I like this program because it integrates conservation with disaster relief."

The program fulfills the service requirements of AmeriCorps, enabling each participant to earn a scholarship of \$4725 upon the completion of 1700 service hours. According to Danielczyk, it is a complex and challenging yearlong regimen for young men and women, providing technical skills and project management; leadership development; and training in disaster response and recovery techniques. It includes rigorous training at the Wildland Firefighting Academy, which is offered by the Marin County Fire Department through College of Marin. Alongside professional firefighter candidates, Corps Respond participants learn about fire ecology, acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to respond to wildfires and become certified wildland firefighters.

Not only physically demanding, "the work can get monotonous," Danielczyk admits. "And although it may not seem heroic work, it is important work. It will save lives. It will be effective in preventing a fire or reducing a fire's intensity when a fire occurs."

In a whirlwind of activity over the course of nine months, the team has been engaged by the San Rafael Fire Department to reduce fire fuels on San Rafael Hill and, for Marin County Open Space District and for Marin Municipal Water District, worked on fire-hazard mitigation projects in the Mill Valley, Tiburon and Larkspur areas. The team has also performed flood-control work for the Marin County Department of Public Works, Flood Control and Water Conservation District. Novato Creek, Pacheco Creek, Warner Creek and Wilson Creek count among the sites of their efforts.

As their year of service draws to a close, the team, having achieved proficiency in an emerging specialty, will be instructing the public in disaster preparedness through a series of workshops, including one being coordinated with the Marin County Office of Emergency Services. As a sponsor of the countywide Get Ready program, the department offers emergency-preparedness training free to county residents. Team members are scheduled to teach one class this fall. For Gretchen, this is a satisfying culmination of a yearlong dual commitment to improve the environment and positively affect the greater community. She sees her future down that path as she considers her educational and career plans.

Interested in joining CCNB's Corps Respond program—or another CCNB program? Please contact Human Resources Manager William Pagán at:

Phone: 415.454.4554, Extension 144




Email: wpagan@

ConservationCorpsNorthBay.org

CCNB Wish List

Please support CCNB with your tax-deductible gift.

What we need:

-  Laptop and projector for presentations
-  3 plasma televisions for teleconferencing between offices in San Rafael, Novato and Santa Rosa
-  20 sets of Aqua deluxe stereo headphones with mono volume control to help our students fully and privately utilize our educational computer programs

For more information about in-kind donations, please contact Development Associate Mary Ewing at:

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Workplace Giving

Many employers today offer their employees the opportunity to make donations to their favorite charities through payroll deduction.

Please consider designating all, or a portion, of your contribution to Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB) through your workplace-giving campaign. CCNB is a member of Local Independent Charities of America (www.lic.org), a federation of over 700 local nonprofit charities.

If you are an employee of a company that promotes charitable giving through a matching gifts program, you could double the impact of your contribution to Conservation Corps North Bay. Please check with the human resources director at your company to make sure that Conservation Corps North Bay is included in your company's campaign.

To designate a payroll-deducted donation to CCNB, please make sure you include the appropriate code for the your employer's workplace-giving campaign when making your gift:

-  Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) # 19873
-  California State Employees' Charitable Campaign # 598

We would be happy to come to your workplace to make a presentation about CCNB. For more information, please contact Development Director Laura J. Giacomini at:

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Thank you for your support!



CONSERVATION CORPS NORTH BAY COMMUNITY SERVICE DAYS

EVENT DATE	EVENT
MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2009	MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE
SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2009	CESAR CHAVEZ DAY OF SERVICE & LEARNING
SATURDAY, APRIL 25 2009	EARTH DAY
FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2009	SUMMER SERVICE DAYS
FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2009	SUMMER SERVICE DAYS
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2009	CALIFORNIA COASTAL CLEANUP DAY

Visit ConservationCorpsNorthBay.org for more information!

FROM MARILEE ECKERT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's official! Marin Conservation Corps is now Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB), with offices in San Rafael, Novato and Santa Rosa.

What does this mean for the counties of Marin and Sonoma?

We are committed to continuing our programs in Marin County. Concurrently, we are expanding our service area to include Sonoma County so that its youth can benefit from serving their community through a corps program.

From our Santa Rosa office, we are launching community recycling and natural resources programs, similarly structured to those successfully operating in Marin. We intend to add other programs as well, based on community interest and demand.

Why not just stick with Marin? Since Marin has one of the best corps around, why not be content with that?

For several years, Sonoma County community leaders have sought our advice and expertise on how to start a corps, making a persuasive case for the need for a youth corps and the wealth of conservation project opportunities available in their county. But until now, the hurdles of providing sufficient infrastructure and finding the resources to develop an effective corps program seemed insurmountable.

Why did Marin Conservation Corps take this on now?

The reason is twofold. First, a recent dramatic increase in gang-related activity in Sonoma County underscores the urgent



Marilee Eckert

need by its youth for a positive alternative to risky and destructive behaviors. A corps is perfect for this because it provides a combination of education and job training, along with a strong sense

of belonging to a group, albeit diverse. It's an experience that our corpsmembers describe as being part of a family. It grounds their lives and connects them to their communities. Meeting new people, forming friendships, cleaning up the neighborhood, getting a high school diploma, and doing it all while earning a paycheck can have a profound effect on one's view of the world. Second, we are part of a nationwide corps network that has launched an effort to grow the corps movement so that youth in every community have the opportunity to serve their community through a youth corps. This, at a time when we were provided with funding for expansion: CCNB was one of 12 local community conservation corps in California to receive a grant to extend its recycling program from the Department of Conservation, Division of Recycling. Thus, we had the momentum and the resources we needed to afford Sonoma County youth a wonderful opportunity.

So as we move ahead, we bear a new name, sport a new look and have a bigger commitment. But our steps still echo the same mission and a 26-year tradition. The new crop of young men and women entering our doors join several thousand others who have found the path to a better future. We couldn't be more thrilled.

Profile

A Path to a Dream Takes a Detour



AmeriCorps member Matt Gunn, with students from San Jose Middle School's Cesar Chavez After School Service Club.

Looking out from his perch on the Great Wall of China, 21-year-old Matt Gunn was “stoked.” On an idyllic adventure in the summer of 2007 with college friends, Matt surveyed the view and let his thoughts wander to another journey he hoped to undertake soon, in fulfillment of a long-time dream: to become a Peace Corps volunteer.

In high school, Matt had formed a close bond with a teacher, a woman who was a former Peace Corps volunteer. She opened Matt’s eyes to volunteer service, affording him the opportunity to work summers on several Peace Corps projects in the Dominican Republic. So it was the natural next step for Matt to enter the Peace Corps after graduating college, and he contemplated spending “two or three years—or the rest of my life—abroad.”

Upon his return home from China, Matt underwent an extensive physical, a requirement of the Peace Corps. That exam uncovered a suspicious lump in his neck. A biopsy revealed thyroid cancer, and Matt’s world was suddenly turned upside down.

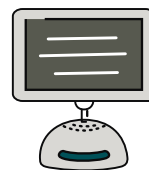
The prognosis was excellent, though, and after two surgeries and a course of iodine radiation therapy, Matt was on the road to recovery. Yet he felt directionless. “My life map was completely obliterated,” he says.

Matt turned to his friend and former teacher for advice. She suggested that Matt look at local opportunities. He says: “That’s when I thought about nonprofits and AmeriCorps as an option. What [CCNB] offered was perfect.”

Matt entered CCNB’s Youth in Environmental Service (YES) program in December 2007 and quickly proved to be a natural leader and teacher, spearheading the successful grant proposal for a civic engagement project he entitled “One Hike,” based, he says, “on the philosophy of Richard Louv,” who first identified nature-deficit disorder in children.

“This wired generation of Facebooking, My-Spacing, Wii-playing youth are so consumed by these applications, they are not experiencing the outdoors,” Matt explains, “[and] are disconnected to the world at large. From an environmental standpoint, there is also no motivation for conservancy: they don’t have a sense that they are all connected to the natural environment.”

Reasoning that “we are our own most valuable resources,” Matt conceived a plan that tapped the potential of his peers as role models—how they can “affect young people, just by interacting with them.” And the plan “was just one hike,” with kids from Novato’s San Jose Middle School and Marin City’s Martin Luther King Academy



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ConservationCorpsNorthBay.org

participating, each matched to an AmeriCorps volunteer for a half-day on a mountain and one-on-one discussions that had no boundaries.

Matt’s passion was also evident in the classroom. As one of two YES members leading the Cesar Chavez After School Service Club at San Jose Middle School, he challenged students to look beyond themselves. He recalls: “I took them to Angel Island, where we did litter abatement on the beach. We talked about the history of Angel Island and the struggle of Chinese immigrants. It was hard for kids to grasp some of these deeper themes. We spoke about human rights, inequality and discrimination. Did I make an impact? I say absolutely I did, even if I just planted a seed.”

Over the summer, Matt continued to impress his young charges, leading Project ReGeneration teams in environmental service-learning projects and in Summer Service Days projects. (See “ReGen Members Speak Up,” on page 4.)

“I think of my time at [CCNB] as a salient experience,” Matt says. He now sees his future clearly—he is meant to be a teacher. But he has another detour in mind before he reaches that destination—a trip to South America, where he will pay his way by “working on organic farms in different countries to get an authentic experience.”



KUDOS!

WESTERN FAIRS ASSOCIATION AWARD — A winner of California’s Wrap Reduction Award Program for the past 13 years, CCNB provides essential community services by working with local land management agencies, municipalities, and others to capture recyclable waste. CCNB also provides recycling services for special events in Marin and Sonoma. This past summer, CCNB was a key partner in working with the Marin County Fair to make it the “greenest county fair on earth” and was awarded the Western Fairs Association Blue Ribbon Award in recognition of its efforts.



CCNB OFFERS QUALITY EDUCATION — The John Muir Charter School, which partners with CCNB in providing an on-site high school for corpsmembers, received full accreditation from the Western Association of Schools & Colleges (WASC) in June 2008. This action certifies the school as a trustworthy institution and validates the integrity of CCNB’s Education Program.

ReGen Members Speak Up: What They Learned on Their Summer Break



Two members of a ReGen team attack pampas grass, an aggressive, nonnative invader of Marin's public lands.

I was the typical teenager, quite possibly self-possessed, moody, aware of the flaws of society ..., blind as to how I could unbind my hands and help.

My motivations [for participating in Project ReGeneration] were almost purely for personal gain. I wanted community service hours ... to look good on my college applications.

My view [changed when my team tried] to turn our abstract ideas such as same-sex marriage, day laborers and the war in Palestine into feasible projects. My leader, Matt [Gunn], said something that has stuck with me since: [It may be that] there is nothing we can do about a particular issue [because

it's] not feasible within the three hours we have [for a service project]. Those battles just have a different place. It doesn't mean they cannot be fought.

This became a wide-open door of opportunity. Unhindered, my imagination began planning project after project ..., cause after cause to fight for.... I cannot do any of them [now] by myself ..., that is for later.

For now, I am happy to be able to dream, to draw pictures in the clouds of a world I can change. The opportunities are right there; all I have to do is step up and seize. ~Whitney K., excerpted from her essay "Thoughts from a Reillusioned Teenager"

Not only has [CCNB] taught me about recycling, but [it's] taught me the importance of working as a team. Half the things my team was assigned to do would have been impossible to do alone. Okay, well, not impossible, but it would have taken a lot more work, and a lot more time. So saving the earth is really a team effort. It cannot be done just by one person. It has to be shared, and everyone needs to contribute. ~Karl P.

Most people are unaware of the environmental issues of the world, but at [CCNB], everyone is filled in. I've learned that even in a small town like Novato, there are many issues to be dealt with. Service learning is important, since most of the people who are causing global warming don't know that they're doing it. ~Lane M.

Conceived in 1997, Project ReGeneration (ReGen) engages middle and high students in a varied program of environmental service-learning projects, leadership development and recreational activities. It also provides participants with the opportunity to satisfy a high school science requirement.

Approximately 140 youths take part each summer in the program, which is divided into two four-week sessions. They are organized into teams led by AmeriCorps members in CCNB's Youth in Environmental Service program.

In addition to a preplanned curriculum, ReGen promotes team-driven, creative solutions to community needs. One of the tasks of each team is to design and host a volunteer community project for CCNB's annual Summer Service Days.

Applications for the 2009 summer sessions of Project ReGeneration will be

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Peter and Patricia Schmale of sponsor Farallone Pacific Insurance Services at Summer Service Days' Stinson Beach Clean-Up.

made available online this winter at ConservationCorpsNorthBay.org.

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