Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

2010 ANNUAL REPORT



TEACHING INDIVIDUALS TO TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL THEIR ACTIONS

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I discovered my ability to see an impossible task through to its completion by maintaining a positive attitude.

- Will Corps Member

Letters from the Board Chair & President

O N a gray but warm day in late winter, I joined 90 friends of the VYCC to ski the 11 miles from Bolton Valley to VYCC's Monitor Barns. Deep in the beech, maple, and spruce forest that bounded the trail, I took a moment to contemplate the day ahead.

As I stopped, I knew I was experiencing the hallmark of the VYCC: our "crew" of skiers had a clear and collective goal; we were outside, working hard; we were responsible for our own well-being while taking care of one another; we were determined to do our best. Later, when we reached the barns, everyone felt a genuine and well-earned

sense of pride and accomplishment. For young people or adults, what could be healthier or more fun?

Today, no organization can match our experience in providing conservation and education programs for young Vermonters. What remains, though, is to ensure that the VYCC experience is available to even greater numbers of future Corps Members. VYCC's board and staff are deeply committed to this work; I am honored to be associated with such a highly motivated and effective group of people working to accomplish such exciting goals.

I look forward to sharing our results <u>and</u> celebrating the accomplishments of the young people who enroll in VYCC's programs. Thank you for supporting the essential work of the VYCC.

Richard Darby, Board Chair

T HE VYCC is guided by its mission: to teach individuals to take personal responsibility for all their actions.

This mission is supported by a simple and time-tested model – young people working together in small groups with talented and well-trained leaders on projects that are valued by communities – that creates the conditions for tremendously powerful learning. In this light, the VYCC does far more than build trails and bridges on public land – we teach people important skills that last a lifetime.

Though our model is simple, our programs are diverse and the outcomes, impressive.

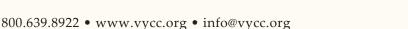
All-female leadership crews empower young women, students on the verge of dropping out join crews and earn academic credit, and youth with visual disabilities gain confidence and independence as they complete conservation projects alongside those with complete visual function. Monitor Barns Farm is thriving – interns are growing food for 100 CSA members and the one in seven Vermonters who are food insecure. And, of course, hundreds of young people learn technical and life skills as they complete conservation projects and act as responsible stewards of Vermont's public land through our traditional conservation crews.

After 25 years, over 5,400 alumni from every county and nearly every Vermont town have benefited from VYCC programs. I am enormously proud of the work VYCC crews have accomplished – when given the chance, young people are capable of achieving great things that make the world a better place!

Thank you for your continued belief in young people and for supporting a transformative experience for a growing number of youth.

Most sincerely,

Thomas Hark, President





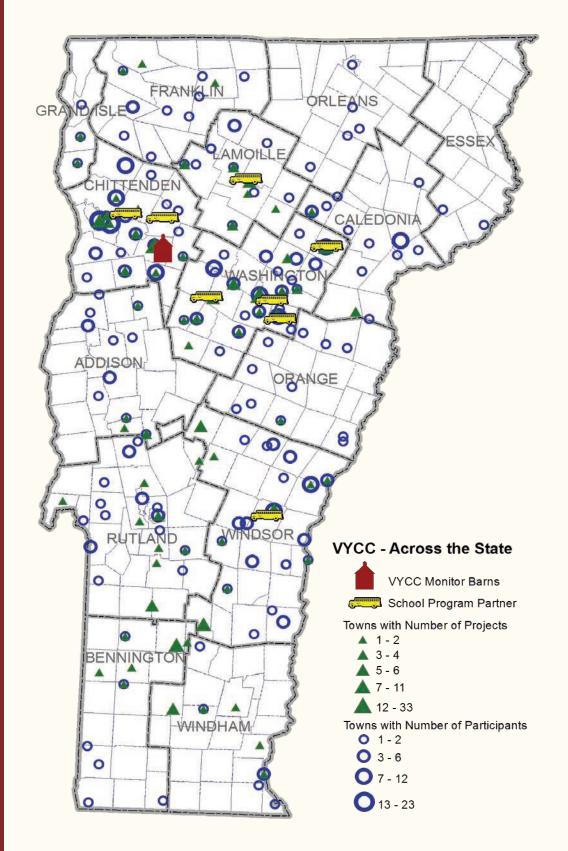


2010 by the Numbers

404 Corps Members

- 71 Crew Leaders, Park Educators, and School Instructors
- 55 Crews
- 91 Project Sites
- 491,796 Feet of Trail Built
- 345,315 Feet of Trail Maintained
- 72 Bridges Constructed
- 934,064 Square Feet of Invasives Removed
- **106 Project Sponsors**
- 80 CSA Members
- 900 Broiler Chickens Raised
- 2,750 Pounds of Food Donated
- 1,342 Donors
- **147 Volunteers**
- 169,833 Service Hours

Conservation that Connects Communities throughout the State



Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

The Year in Review

I N 2010 the VYCC enrolled approximately 450 Corps Members and Crew Leaders through an array of programs – a summer program for the blind and visually impaired, Farm Internships, a school program for at-risk students, all-female leadership crews, and over two dozen conservation crews. Each of these programs provides professional and academic opportunities to develop self confidence, to improve technical and leadership skills, and to gain work experience through the completion of projects that are rooted firmly in Vermont's traditions and landscape.

The map at left demonstrates the statewide reach of VYCC programs. Fiftyfive crews worked at 91 project sites contstructing and maintaining trails and bridges, building water bars and other drainage structures to control erosion, and removing invasive species. A farm crew grew vegetables, herbs, and flowers for an 80-member CSA, raised 900 broilers, and donated nearly 3,000 pounds of produce to Vermont's food insecure. In total, VYCC Staff, Corps Members, Crew Leaders, and volunteers worked over 170,000 hours to improve Vermont's land and water; to grow local produce for those in need; and to teach young people the values of environmental conservation and personal responsibility.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Heather Furman, Executive Director, Stowe Land Trust

W HEN Heather Furman moved to Vermont in the spring of 1998, she had just spent several years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal. She was hired by the VYCC to be a Park Manager and to supervise a crew of seven Corps Members at Maidstone State Park in the Northeast Kingdom. Living in a remote location, along with the VYCC's emphasis on teamwork, stewardship, and community service, resonated with her after her Peace Corps experience. Leading a VYCC crew was the first time



she held a leadership position and she felt a deep sense of responsibility for her crew. A self-described "tough boss," she recalls the summer fondly, "we worked hard but had loads of fun."

Graduate school at the University of Vermont followed where Heather earned a Master of Science degree in Natural Resources. Since 2003, Heather has worked as the Executive Director of the Stowe Land Trust where she has drawn upon her past experience with the VYCC. "My job as Executive Director demands many of the skills that I learned as a Crew Leader including patience, leading by example, and juggling many priorities at once," she noted. "I can't think of a better job than land conservation," she continued. "I don't know where my career path will take me, but I know this passion will be central to my next adventure."

Are you a VYCC alum with an interesting story to share? If so, contact Bethany Hanna at 802.434.3969 ext. 122. Want to keep in touch with fellow alumni? Find us on Facebook at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps.



We mont Youth Conservation Corps

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Conservation Program

E ACH year the VYCC hires hundreds of young people, ages 16 to 24, to work on high-priority conservation, recreation, alternative transportation, and community service projects. High expectations, hard work, and a rich educational curriculum draw youth from a variety of geographic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds together to live, work, and recreate as a tight-knit community. Corps Members who wouldn't otherwise spend time together form strong bonds, understand new perspectives, and learn as much from each other as they do from the adult mentors leading their crew.

Crew experiences vary and range from working in Corps Members' hometowns to living and working immersed in Vermont's backcountry. Each Corp Member is encouraged to step beyond perceived boundaries in a safe and supportive environment.

In 2010 nearly 450 Corps Members and Crew Leaders worked on Wilderness; Roving; Community; Park; Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP); and Leadership Development Crews. Our Green Mountain Internship Program also provided students with opportunities to develop skills at environmentally-minded businesses.



WILDERNESS AND ROVING CREWS

Approximately 270 Corps Members and Crew Leaders worked and learned together on six Wilderness Crews and 22 Roving Crews. Wilderness Crews worked on remote sections of the Long Trail/Appalachian Trail near Notown's Stony Brook Shelter, Griffith Lake, Baker Peak, and Clarendon. Roving Crews lived and worked in a variety of locations, including the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, several Vermont State Parks, the Green Mountain National Forest, and in local communities throughout the state. Corps Members learned teamwork, leadership, and technical skills while they moved rocks, built bridges, and removed invasive species.



COMMUNITY CREWS

Five non-residential Community Crews of eight to ten Corps Members and two Crew Leaders were based in the towns of Woodstock, Richmond, Montpelier, Burlington, and Rutland. Crews completed projects in partnership with local agencies, such as Vermont's Agency of Transportation, the Vermont Department of Labor, and the Cross Vermont Trail Association. Corps Members work closely with community members to build and maintain local resources – trails, bridges, parks – that they and their neighbors can enjoy. This work forges deeper connections to hometowns and instills pride and <u>a sense of ownership in Corps Members</u>.

PARK CREWS

In partnership with Vermont's Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, the Moosalamoo Association, and AmeriCorps, the VYCC fielded two Park Educator Crews and two Park Operations Crews. Park Educator Crews provided exceptional visitor programming at North Hero State Park, Grand Isle State Park, Burton Island State Park, Lake Carmi State Park, Branbury State Park, and the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area. On the Park Operations Crews, Corps Members learned effective leadership, community living, and job skills while operating Quechee State Park and Elmore State Park.



LEAP CREWS

A Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) Crew was in the field for two, four-week sessions. Through a vocational training program at ReSOURCE and weekly service projects, five youth with visual impairments learned independent living and valuable employment skills. The second crew was an integrated crew of visually impaired youth and youth with complete visual function. All members of this crew gained self-confidence as they camped in the woods behind the VYCC West Monitor Barn, worked on the farm, and made improvements to the VYCC trail system.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CREWS

Two Leadership Development Crews – one co-ed and one all-female – were in the field for nine-week sessions. Leadership crew members participated in an intense leadership development curriculum that included more than 20 workshops ranging from leadership strategies to active citizenship. They also increased their hands-on knowledge of carpentry and conservation, helping to build a wheelchairaccessible trail in Groton State Forest, constructing a muchneeded bridge at Seyon Lodge State Park, and constructing 80 feet of boardwalk at Burton Island State Park.



GREEN MOUNTAIN INTERNSHIPS

GMI matches students with green industry internships and jobs that are designed to fit the needs of both the student and employer. During the school year, internships typically consist of 180 hours over 12 weeks, and summer internships generally last three to eight weeks for 32-40 hours a week and consist of both paid and unpaid opportunities. In 2010, 19 businesses and institutions hosted approximately 300 students from 25 participating schools through GMI. All students earned academic credit for their internships.





The VYCC has given my son confidence in being a student. He joined the program uncertain about his academic ability – almost certain he could not succeed at school. Participation in the VYCC has helped him see how he can not only survive, but succeed, in school.

- Parent, School Partnership Program

School Partnership Program

T HE School Partnership Program provides an alternative path to graduation that is authentic, engaging, and transformative. Students earn academic credit while working on small, supportive crews led by skilled Instructors. A relevant and dynamic project-based curriculum empowers students to take personal responsibility for their education.

During the 2010 spring semester, 87 students enrolled from eight schools and one technical center. Four schools adopted these programs for the fall semester. Although this resulted in fewer students enrolled in VYCC-led programs, it represented greater institutionalization of alternative education which is a success in its own right. While students remained the primary focus, having fewer students enrolled allowed us to increase our focus on improving staff training, instructor retention, curriculum design, and behavior management.

By all accounts, 2010 was a successful year. We had the highest instructor return rate in the history of the program, instituted a new professional development program, and enhanced technical skills and communication trainings for our Instructors.

As a result of these efforts, along with a refined recruitment process, student retention rates have increased from 80 to 98%.





Monitor Barns Farm: Farm & Food Program

I N 2010 Monitor Barns Farm expanded dramatically from a quarter-acre garden plot to a three-acre vegetable and pasture-raised poultry farm. The farm is guided by the belief that all members of our community should have access to fresh and healthy food. Unfortunately, one in seven Vermonters is food insecure.

To help meet this growing need, over 2,700 pounds of produce were donated to area food shelves, notably the Richmond Food Shelf and Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Produce from the farm was also sold to local schools within the Chittenden East Supervisory Union School District and at local farmers markets.

The VYCC continued its partnership with Maple Wind Farm, a diversified livestock and vegetable operation, to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) network.

Every Thursday afternoon from June to October, members gathered at the West Monitor Barn to pick up a weekly share of vegetables, tour the farm, visit with farm staff and interns, and swap recipes. We also offered CSA members a pick-your-own garden of herbs, flowers, cherry tomatoes, and hot peppers. In total, the VYCC Farm Coordinator, two AmeriCorps Farm Team Leaders, and two Farm Interns grew over 40 varieties of vegetables, flowers, and herbs.

Monitor Barns Farm raised, processed, and sold or donated nearly 900 pasture-raised broiler chickens, and managed a flock of 40 laying hens (and two roosters) that produced approximately three dozen eggs daily. Draft horses cultivated the fields on a weekly basis, reducing our carbon footprint and the labor required for weeding.

Two special events were season highlights – a draft horse demonstration in June led by Bruce Hennessey, Maple Wind Farm co-owner, and a harvest potluck in late summer.

School and Conservation Crews contributed greatly to the farm and in the process, Corps Members acquired valuable skills in sustainable agriculture, animal husbandry, and food preparation.

> SAVE THE DATE Draft Horse Demonstration Sunday, July 31, 2011



I have come away with a whole season's worth of knowledge about how to grow good food from seed to harvest. I don't know that I'll be a farmer in this life, but I will certainly aspire to grow as much of my own food as possible and this season has given me a lot of the tools to do that.

- Kelly McQuade, VYCC Farm Intern

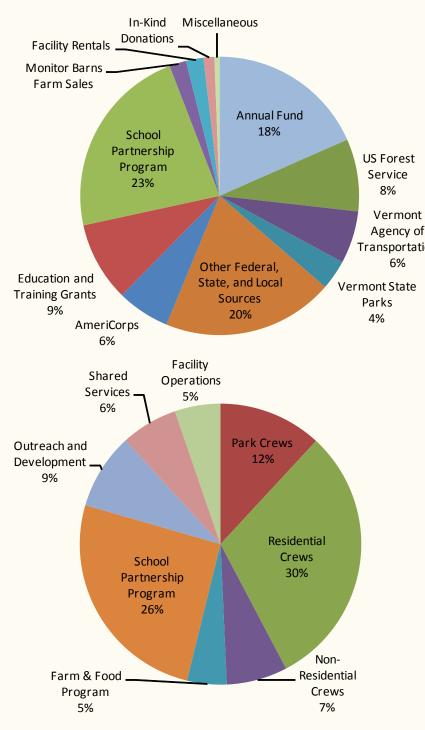
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REVENUE

| | Annual Fund | \$542,550 |
|-----|---|-----------|
| | Project Specific Funding | |
| | US Forest Service | \$248,090 |
| | Vermont Agency of Transportation | \$179,824 |
| | Vermont State Parks | \$102,358 |
| | Other Federal, State, and Local Sources | \$587,133 |
| | AmeriCorps | \$181,300 |
| | Education and Training Grants | \$272,197 |
| f | School Partnership Program | \$665,603 |
| ion | Monitor Barns Farm Sales | \$58,057 |
| | Facility Rentals | \$59,651 |
| | In-Kind Donations | \$36,948 |
| | Miscellaneous | \$18,061 |
| | Endowments | \$852 |
| | Total Revenue \$ | 2,952,623 |

EXPENSES

| Conservation Program | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Park Crews | \$349,469 |
| Residential Crews | \$869,940 |
| Non-Residential Crews | \$205,924 |
| Farm & Food Program | \$133,566 |
| School Partership Program | \$755,351 |
| Outreach and Development | \$257,451 |
| Shared Services | \$192,056 |
| Facility Operations | \$154,739 |
| Total Expenses | \$2,944,631 |

Annual Operating Budget

THE VYCC ended 2010 in good shape, despite the challenging economic climate, as a result of careful planning, a fair amount of belt-tightening, and continued efforts to diversify revenues. As has been the case for many years, project sponsors' payment for the work our crews complete provided the largest source of revenue (38%) – we view this as an affirmation of the value and high quality of that work. School Partners, combined with AmeriCorps funding and Education and Training Grants, comprised another significant source of revenue, helping the VYCC to offer additional year-round programs to more young people throughout the region. Last but certainly not least, the VYCC Annual Fund provided 18% of the organization's revenue – we are consistently honored and awed by the generosity of our friends.

Thank you, 2010 Donors

I T is with sincere gratitude and appreciation that we recognize all those who contributed to the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps in 2010. Your dedication and commitment to youth education and conservation in Vermont are evident in the funds, time, expertise, products, and services you give to the organization. Since the VYCC was founded over a quarter century ago, crew members have completed millions of dollars' worth of high-priority conservation, agriculture, and community service projects throughout the state, helping to conserve and protect Vermont's natural resources while teaching valuable technical and leadership skills, and promoting an ethic of personal responsibility for the diverse members of our crews. Your support has been integral to this success. Thank you for your generous contributions.

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Each project we finished was tied to a huge sense of accomplishment.

- Ana, Female Leadership Development Crew Member

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Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

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> I learned being a good leader sometimes means allowing others to lead. A good team can accomplish just about anything.

- Nathan, Wilderness Crew Member

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> I learned that I am way stronger and more adaptable than I ever thought possible. I learned that I am happy and comfortable living in a tent and eating the same things for breakfast and lunch every day.

- Vanessa Emery Crew Leader

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> I learned a lot about the environment. Every project helped me to understand how everything in nature works.

- Kristen Roving Crew Member

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THE HISTORIC WEST MONITOR BARN

Surrounded by two hundred thirty acres of conserved agricultural and forested lands, the West Monitor Barn was originally constructed by the Whitcomb Family in 1903. Renovated by the VYCC in 2005, the barn now serves as the VYCC headquarters for year-round education and training programs. Interested in learning more about this historic and iconic treasure? This unique community venue is available for weddings, meetings, and events – stop by for a tour! For more information, call Cailie Burns at 802.434.3969 ext. 113.



Town of Pittsford Town of Richmond Town of Stowe Town of Wallingford - Conservation Commission Town of Warren - Conservation Commission Town of West Haven Town of West Rutland Town of Williston Town of Woodstock Union 32 High School Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund Valley Cares Valley Dream Farm Vermont Agency of Transportation Vermont Center for Clean and Clear Vermont Center for Ecostudies Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation Aiken State Forest Branbury State Park Burton Island State Park Elmore State Park

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> Keegan Tierney Operations Manager

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2011 CALENDAR

Bolton to the Barns Saturday, March 5th

Spring Leadership Crews Saturday, April 23rd -Saturday, May 21st

> Summer Start Up Friday, June 24th

Grab the Torch Sunday, July 10th -Friday, July 15th

Draft Horse Demonstration Sunday, July 31st

Fall Leadership Crews Saturday, August 27th -Saturday, September 24th

School Program Start Up Friday, September 2nd

Denim & Diamonds Saturday, September 24th

Online Auction Friday, November 25th -Friday, December 16th

MONITOR BARNS FARM CSA

- Summer Share: Twenty weekly pick-ups from June to October
- Fall Share: Single pick-up of fall storage crops
- Winter Share: Five monthly pick-ups from November to March
- Poultry Share: Six chickens, two per month

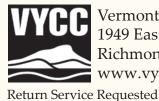
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