

Sixty high school students spent six weeks this summer in the classroom and in the field, learning and applying what they learned to real work experience.

CCCEEC's Park Management Program for Youth is made possible through the generous contributions of the Fairmount Park Commission, the Natural Lands Restoration & Environmental Education Program, Philadelphia Water Department, Penn State University, Communities in Schools of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Youth Network, School District of Philadelphia, Bartram Cluster, Philadelphia Activities Fund and an anonymous donor.

### HOW DOES TRAIL DEVELOPMENT EFFECT THE COMMUNITY?

by Aaron Drake, Masterman School

We in the Cobbs Creek Trail team created terraces on the hillside of the park to prevent rain water washing the soil down and the trash into the stream and that will help out the water and keep it clean. Developing trails will give the community an extra source of recreation and a way of traveling from one place to another. People who like to ride their bikes can ride somewhere without worrying about cars. People who like to horseback ride will have somewhere to do it. People who like nature have somewhere to go and look at nature.

Trails help the community by forming a source of income for the community due to people visiting the area for recreation. They also have a chance to see nature in its right form ? something to beautify the area.

As I reflect on these six weeks, I think about all the different things I've done and all the people I have met. When I think about it, it makes me very happy to know that this program has opened many doors for me and shown me nature from a different point of view. Now I see nature as something to be respected.

Robert Guerrant, Bartram High School

### WE ARE ENVIRONMENTALISTS

by Runa Begum, Bartram High School

We work in the field  
With a lot of different material  
We use the lopper  
To cut the vines  
We use the rake to pull the grass  
We work for the environment to look the best  
We feel proud to say to others that we are environmentalists.

We went down to the "E-Center" and had a race to see the fastest group to identify the most macroinvertebrates. The three groups were The Divas, The All-Stars and the Mob Squad. I was in the group called The Divas. We won the game and we are going to receive a prize. Then, we went to the park to do clean up. I was in the group that had to tear down invasive vines from the tree. The tree looks great thanks to us - and the news people were there to see it.

Alexis Durant, Parkway Gamma

#### AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE CAESAR, COMMUNITY LIAISON AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR FOR FAIRMOUNT PARK'S NATURAL LANDS RESTORATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (NLREEP)

by Theresa Lewis, Bartram High School

Lewis: How could we involve the community with our project?

Caesar: Each person has a chance to organize new groups to learn about the environment.

Lewis: How old is Cobbs Creek Park?

Caesar: The park dates back to 1634, with the invention of the water mill in the new colonies.

Lewis: What kinds of developments were built for the park in the last 25 years?

Caesar: Most recently, we have a new skate house, swimming pool, new picnic areas and a new environmental center.

Lewis: What did Cobbs Creek look like when you first started?

Caesar: A beautiful place that had been forgotten, it needed a lot of help to make it beautiful again.

Lewis: How long will it take to get rid of all the invasive plants and all the pollution?

Caesar: Some of it can be taken care of in a year or two, but some will take more time and money.

Lewis: What does your job consist of?

Caesar: Detailing, designing and implementation of master restoration and trail plans.

Lewis: How can the community contribute to Cobbs Creek Park?

Caesar: By working in collaborative partnership with the park and informing their elected officials of their community park needs.

#### MY TRIP TO THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

by Padma Saha, Bartram High School

We went to the University of Pennsylvania to give a presentation about the Cobbs Creek Park Management Program. Six students participated. I was picked to be one of them. This included two students from each group, the butterfly garden, the trail and the stream. There were also other people who spoke to us about lead. How it is very harmful to us. We tested different materials that people brought from their homes. Some of them had lead and others were negative, meaning no lead was found. After, we finished the testing. We had a discussion session and talked about what each of our groups was going to do this summer. Questions were answered. It was a good trip and presentation.

#### NATURE IS CALLING

by Shanaj Begum, Bartram High School

Birds singing Songs Of Solomon  
Calling us to nourish its land  
People just keep littering and littering  
Nature is tired of it and thinks it's sickening.  
Using our five senses on the trail  
Hearing the birds, Feeling the wind,  
Seeing the different habitats  
And some people even Tasting berries.

There is only one way to improve our trail  
That is if we all come together and help one another  
Nature is calling for our help and we haven't been listening  
We need to open our ears, so our environment can start glistening.

From Sylvan Communities, the quarterly magazine of the Pennsylvania Urban & Community Forestry Council

Sylvan Communities Success Story:

"On the Threshold of a Dream"

Environmental education center in Southwest Philadelphia to have a home of its own

For nearly a decade, residents of Southwest Philadelphia's Cobbs Creek neighborhood have dreamed of converting an historic stables at 63rd & Catherine Streets into the permanent home of the Cobbs Creek Community Environmental Education Center (CCCEEC). The building, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project built in 1939, has been abandoned and deteriorating for some time. It was once the home of the Fairmount Guard, the park's mounted police unit. Despite a few false starts, the dedicated, community-based, volunteer Board of Directors never lost faith. Their dedication and hard work is about to pay off - their dream about to come true. Renovation of the stables has begun.

With the constant support and encouragement of State Senator Anthony H. Williams, the group has successfully lobbied both state and local government for capital appropriations toward the cost of renovations. The William Penn Foundation has also made a substantial contribution. Needed funding is now in place for the first phase of the development.

The new building will contain meeting rooms, classrooms, administrative offices and exhibition space. The building's location in the stream valley, well removed from the busy streets nearby, will provide an idyllic setting for the pursuit of environmental education. A capital campaign continues to raise the funds for completion of laboratories, construction of caretaker's quarters, an interpretive trail system, picnic grove and other planned landscape improvements.

In the years since its inception, despite no paid staff and no home of its own, the CCCEEC has built a reputation for excellence in teacher training and environmental education programming. The programs of the CCCEEC are designed to help community members establish a personal connection with the local ecology. The Center is committed to strengthening environmental education in urban schools through hands-on activities, research and teacher training. Credit for the outstanding success of CCCEEC programming is owing in part to the standard of excellence set by founder and board president Carole Chew Williams, and in part to the strong partnerships built with area residents, educational institutions and environmental advocates.

Carole Williams, a retired science program and curriculum specialist with the School District of Philadelphia, has been steadfast in her insistence that the instruction offered through CCCEEC, to the largely African American student body in Southwest Philadelphia, be content rich and uncompromising in quality. "Our students deserve the same as students in wealthy suburban districts. Far too few African American youngsters are choosing careers in science. Fewer than three percent of our scientists are African American. Clearly, we need to do a better job of delivering science instruction in our urban schools," Williams said. "The Cobbs Creek Community Environmental Education Center remains committed to a content rich science curriculum for Philadelphia school children and to providing a point of entry to rewarding careers in science for people of color. In the process, we are building a greater awareness among city residents of the importance of a healthy natural environment."

Williams refers to CCCEEC's award-winning Park Management Youth Program as one clear example of the organization's ability to forge partnerships and deliver outstanding programming. In this case, the Fairmount Park Commission (FPC) invests considerable resources, both materiel and personnel, in support of a six-week summer program for high school students. The program focuses on environmental sciences with a service learning component involving restoration and repair of the park and creek. According to FPC Executive Director Bill Mifflin, "The CCCEEC's successful work with young people and community volunteers is very important to Fairmount Park's overall expansion of our educational programming and stewardship opportunities, as well as to the general quality of natural resources in the Cobbs Creek watershed. We look forward to an ongoing collaboration with CCCEEC, including expansion of the Park Management Youth Program into a year-round program." Others who have contributed to the program's success include, the Academy of Natural Sciences, Bryn Mawr College, Drexel University, Haverford College, Penn State University School of Forestry, Philadelphia Water Department, the Philadelphia Zoo and the School District of Philadelphia. In 1998, Bartram High School students received the President's Environmental Youth Award, at a White House ceremony, for their work with the Park Management Youth Program.

Without a home of its own, CCCEEC has relied on the hospitality of Penn State University (PSU). For nearly ten years, the university has graciously provided office space at the site of the Philadelphia Cooperative Extension. Elmore Hunter, now a Special Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs at PSU, was County Extension

Director in 1991, when Williams first approached him with her idea to create an environmental education center in West Philadelphia. Hunter has served on the board of directors of CCCEEC since its incorporation in 1992. He is currently 1st Vice President and Secretary of the non-profit corporation. "My relationship with Carole dates back to the 1980's, when I was Extension Director and she was a science curriculum specialist. She provided entry into the school system for our 4-H programs at that time. The chance for Penn State to support a grass-roots effort to establish an urban center for environmental education seemed to me to be a 'can't miss' opportunity, given the strong emphasis we place in our College of Agricultural Sciences, School of Forestry and environmental education and our desire to increase our presence in Pennsylvania's urban centers. Our commitment to CCCEEC is long-term. We can't wait to get into the new building and strengthen our partnership with 4-H youth programs, internships for our university students, research opportunities along the creek and an expanded role for our School of Forestry." PSU is one of a growing list of institutions of higher learning who have recognized the benefits of partnership with CCCEEC, including Bryn Mawr College, Chestnut Hill College, Community College of Philadelphia, Drexel University, Haverford College, Juniata College, Lincoln University, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, Temple University, University of Pennsylvania and Ursinus College.

Wishing to build on their successes, and to help guide their transition from an "all volunteer" organization to a world class environmental education center, the board of directors has named a new executive director to oversee the operations of the CCCEEC, as the organization prepares to move into its new facility. Alan G. Fastman is well known in the political arena, business community and amongst community leaders as an extremely efficient and effective administrator. Fastman left his position as Senior Staff Advisor for State Senator Anthony Williams on January 1, to join CCCEEC on a full-time basis. A Philadelphia native with roots in the Cobbs Creek community, Fastman is currently a member of the board of Philadelphia United Community Development Corporation, a former director of the Organized Anti-Crime Community Network (OACCN), the Community Occupational Readiness and Placement Program, Inc. (CORPP), and the Helen Kate Furness Free Library. Fastman is an active Big Brother volunteer since 1975. In business for himself for most of his adult life, he brings over twenty years of managerial experience encompassing several disciplines of specific value to CCCEEC including business management (for profit and not-for-profit), building construction, politics and government. He will oversee the construction project and build the organization's capacity to occupy its new home with the staff and programming that has long been the promise of the Cobbs Creek Community Environmental Education Center.