

Press Announcement

Breaking New Ground

Greening Youth Foundation and MLK Historic Site Join Forces to Create Future Environmentalists

In a groundbreaking collaboration, Greening Youth Foundation and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site have entered into a partnership that will expose hundreds of young people in metro Atlanta to the story of Dr. King while introducing them to careers in the environment and public land management.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. site is one of 11 National Park Service sites in Georgia, but it's the only one in the city of Atlanta. The King site is one of the top tourist attractions in the Southeast, drawing more than 1 million visitors per year. The site was established in 1980 to preserve the places where Dr. King was born, worked, worshipped and is buried. The Park is comprised of 34 acres and includes Dr. King's birth home, the King Center for Nonviolent Social Change and Dr. King's gravesite. A major feature of the site is the interpretative presentations on Dr. King's life. Officials from the National Park Service would like to use the partnership with Greening Youth to expose more young people to the behind-the-scenes work that goes into managing a major NPS site.

"Our relationship with Greening Youth Foundation underscores the broader commitment of the National Park Service to engage underserved youth with public lands," said Judy Forte, superintendent of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. "Through this agreement, we and the Greening Youth Foundation hope to inspire a progressive corps of future leaders who cherish their role as stewards of American heritage."

Though public land management and forestry services account for a large percentage of the jobs in the United States, careers in this area aren't perceived as accessible to youngsters in underserved communities—a fact that the Greening Youth Foundation is committed to turning around.

"As the environmental industry becomes increasingly important to the overall health of the U.S. economy, we think it's crucial that more young people, particularly those in communities that have been denied access, be exposed to the multitude of fabulous careers available to them in the environmental world," said James Ezeilo, Operations Director for GYF. "We are so excited that hundreds of children in Greening Youth schools will have a chance to get this exposure at one of the most important and best-known NPS sites in the country."

GYF Americorps members will work on projects throughout the 22 structures at the King site, weatherizing buildings, conducting green audits and trying to reduce the site's

carbon footprint. In addition, youngsters from the 12 Greening Youth schools in metro Atlanta will visit the King site on regular field trips throughout the year. As part of its programming, Greening Youth Foundation uses a curriculum that fuses technology, music, sports, literature and old-fashioned fun to emphasize the importance of respecting and protecting the environment and to engage students as active participants in their own education.

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