



# Pathways to Parks: Groundwork Denver Youth Internship



## The Program

The Groundwork Denver youth internship program is a three-year partnership, started in 2010, between Groundwork Denver and Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) through the National Park Service Youth Internship Program (YIP). Together, the goal of the program is to develop young environmental stewards who will develop an awareness of natural resource and environmental jobs as well as an understanding of their connection and a sense of place. More than ninety percent of the Groundwork Denver Interns are from low income families and are recruited from a diverse population of Denver youth.

## Groundwork Denver

Groundwork Denver, a trust of Groundwork USA, is a community and environmentally focused nonprofit that works with Denver's low income communities. Groundwork Denver strives to develop strong partnerships to deliver programs and resources that help lower-income communities not only make a wide range of environmental improvements, but also to build community involvement and develop leadership and job skills. Groundwork Denver's mission is to bring about the sustained improvement of the physical environment and promote health and well-being through community-based partnerships and action.



“Everybody worked really hard for ten-hour days, I mean, we busted our butts out there and we did a really good job.”

- Domonique, from her 2010 park experience



“I got to see plants I’ve never seen before, be at heights I’ve never been before, and I mean I was challenged with the altitude and the elevation a little bit”

- Robert, from his 2010 park experience

## Partnership

The internship program is focused on providing opportunities for youth to make personal connections to nature while creating authentic work experiences that lead to National Park Service jobs. Groundwork Denver recruits, hires, trains, supervises, and mentors 10 lower income urban youth aged 18-24 to work in the park. They seek individuals who display a strong work ethic, positive attitude, enthusiasm, willingness to learn new things, teamwork and leadership, ability to follow directions, and interest in improving the environment.

The National Park Service provides the funding, projects, supervision, and various training and education programs for the interns while they camp in the park. The interns’ first week consists of training and professional development activities, including camping basics, leadership, and possible career choices. The remainder of the internship consists of work with park work teams on projects that may include: trail construction, hazardous tree removal, post-fire vegetation restoration, constructing fences, and energy monitoring.

## Going Beyond

The internship program, started in 2010, has already shown strong positive tangible and intangible results from miles of restored trails to personal connections and positive interactions with visitors and staff. One Groundwork Denver Intern expressed, “Working and living at Rocky Mountain National Park was an experience that will last a lifetime. I am very grateful.” Interns also have an opportunity to come back in subsequent summers and work for the park through a Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) position while they are still in school.

