

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Lehigh Gap Nature Center

Color of Nature II

SUMMARY

Color of Nature II was a continuation and expansion of our successful Color of Nature program of outreach to communities of color with our conservation message. The main tenant of the program has been to train leaders from communities of color in Allentown to lead nature/conservation programs and serve as role models for children of color. These leaders helped with summer parks programs in Allentown (with Wildlands Conservancy), our Conservation Leadership Academy (with Jacobsburg EEC), summer school programs in Allentown, and nature walks in Allentown's parks.



CHALLENGE

People of color are vastly under-represented in conservation groups and in natural resource professions. Few people of color participate in nature-related activities such as bird watching, wildlife photography, and hiking. Even fewer people of color enter careers in natural resource or conservation fields. At Beltzville State Park, where 90% or more of summer weekend visitors are Latino, there are no Latino employees because in the words of the park superintendent, "There are no Latino applicants." Realizing that people of color deserve to enjoy the beauty and benefits of nature and have opportunities for careers that are unknown to most people of color, we embarked on an outreach program to engage people of color with nature and create awareness of potential careers in students of color.

FUNDING

Grant Award:
\$5,000

Match:
\$17,887

Total Project Cost:
\$22,887

PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

Key partners included
Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center for Conservation Leadership Academy and our leaders also worked with staff from Wildlands Conservancy in Allentown Parks Programs. Additional key funders include the Fowler Family Foundation, Trexler Trust, Century Fund, and Air Products.



SOLUTION

Our programs of outreach to communities of color centered in Allentown. Bilingual nature walks in Allentown parks for families, programs for school children in summer school and the summer parks programs, and our innovative Conservation Leadership Academy are making inroads into engaging people of color with nature and conservation. A key aspect of our program is the employment of leaders who are college students from the communities we are seeking to engage. These college students look like the people we are trying to serve and are especially important to the children. In the past, any nature programs for children in the region have been led by white leaders. We now have leaders of color in teaching roles, showing the students that enjoying nature is cool, and that careers in conservation are possible for them. These leaders also served as residential interns at LGNC, placing them in leadership roles at our Center as well.

RESULTS

The following outputs were recorded for the program:

- Five leaders trained and employed
- Six bilingual nature walks conducted
- 64 after school club programs, 12 summer school programs, and 20 parks programs for students in Allentown
- Conservation Leadership Academy with 14 students and led in part by Color of Nature leaders
- Two, two-day Mini-camps for students from predominantly black Kula Children's Center and their parents
- Residential internships at LGNC for each of the five leaders, becoming involved in all aspects of programming and management of our refuge.

While the impact is difficult to assess in just one year of programming, we can attest that the role model concept has been hugely successful in engaging the students and families who attend our programs. This quote from a mother who forced her daughter to come to the Academy in spite of resistance from the girl: “[My daughter] was amazed at how much she enjoyed and learned from this camp. She mentioned multiple times how she wanted to go again next year and would invite her friends.”

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