

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Wildlands Conservancy
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Lehigh River Sojourn Scholarships (Awarded 2024)

SUMMARY

The 2024 Lehigh River Sojourn, hosted by Wildlands Conservancy, successfully implemented the objectives of the LVG Mini-Grant. Through the grant's support, we awarded **32 scholarships** to community members from under-represented communities, and first responders. The scholarships provided participants with transportation, meals, camping gear, professional guidance, and access to educational and recreational programming. This year Sojourners had the opportunity join in on the Greenways Jamboree at Wayne A. Grube Memorial Park on June 10. Scholarship recipients not only paddled the Lehigh River but also engaged in interactive environmental education and stewardship opportunities, fostering deeper connections to the river and its surrounding ecosystems.



CHALLENGE

The 2024 Lehigh River Sojourn addressed the critical need to connect under-represented communities, youth, and first responders to the Lehigh River and its surrounding natural resources. Many participants came from Environmental Justice (EJ) areas where access to outdoor recreation and environmental education is limited. By providing scholarships that included transportation, meals, and gear, the program removed financial and logistical barriers, ensuring equitable access. The Sojourn offered hands-on environmental education, fostering awareness of watershed health and climate change impacts, while also promoting physical and mental well-being through outdoor experiences. For first responders, the program served as both a respite and a unique opportunity to engage in community stewardship. This project met the community's need for inclusive recreation, environmental education, and strengthened connections to natural spaces, inspiring stewardship among participants from diverse backgrounds.

FUNDING

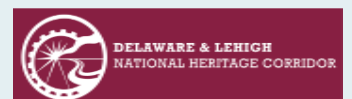
Grant Award:
\$2000

Match:
\$3509.20

Total Project Cost:
\$5509.20

PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

Jim Thorpe River Adventures
Pocono Whitewater
Walnutport Canal Association



SOLUTION

The project filled this need by providing 32 scholarships to individuals from under-represented communities, schools, and first responders, offering access to the 4-day Lehigh River Sojourn. Scholarships covered transportation, meals, gear, and guidance, removing barriers to participation. Through hands-on instruction and outdoor recreation activities, and educational talks about wildlife and history of the watershed, participants learned about watershed health and climate change. Outdoor recreation opportunities, like paddling and camping, fostered physical and mental well-being, while the Greenways Jamboree connected participants to the broader conservation community, inspiring long-term stewardship.

RESULTS

Participant Feedback: 95% of survey respondents rated their overall experience as "4" or "5" out of 5.

New Participants: 70% of scholarship recipients were first-time Lehigh River Sojourn participants.

Increased Awareness: 96% of respondents indicated that the Sojourn increased their awareness of the need for stewardship, restoration, and conservation of river resources.

Qualitative Observations and Quotes:

Favorite Parts: One participant shared, "The guidance was great, especially for my first time in this section of the river." Another noted, "I enjoyed that this was at our own pace; we didn't feel rushed."

Impact: One participant remarked, "This was my first time paddling, and it made me appreciate how important the river is to our community."

Suggestions: Feedback included ideas for more detailed rapid navigation guidance and requests for extended trip durations.

These responses demonstrate the Sojourn's success in fostering environmental stewardship, connecting participants to nature, and creating a memorable outdoor experience for both new and returning participants.

Contact



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