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Get Outdoors! Get a Job! Get Involved!
Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) Gears Up for a Second Season

The city is looking for 44 teens to work in Municipal parks and recreation programs this summer. Youth Employment in Parks (YEP), an innovative program aimed at getting young people outdoors while engaging them with meaningful jobs, is launching its second season. This year, almost twice as many positions are available for diverse Anchorage teens in area parks and recreation facilities.

YEP is a partnership of the Anchorage Parks & Recreation Department and the Alaska Youth for Environmental Action program of the National Wildlife Federation. It was launched last year to positively engage Anchorage youth with the community while fostering healthy, outdoor activity.

Through the program, teens not only learn how to do field projects in parks and recreation sites; they develop civic engagement and leadership skills through weekly workshops and hone job skills through a culminating mentorship week and career fair. This summer youth will participate in outdoor environmental education, work and recreation activities with natural resource and community experts focused on: Safety and Environmental Health; Rain, Waterways and Waterbodies; Sustainable Parks & Recreation; Solid Waste & Recycling; Soft-surfaced trails; and Urban Forestry and Climate Change.

“This is a great opportunity for young people to get a first job and work in our parks,” Mayor Mark Begich said. “They learn what goes on in our park system, while also seeing the value parks and recreation opportunities add to our lives.”

“Youth Employment in Parks is a stellar opportunity for our city to positively engage and train our diverse young people in healthy environments, while exposing them to jobs in the green sector,” said Polly Carr, Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) Program Manager. “YEP teens will be exposed to career opportunities in the natural resource, health, engineering and conservation sectors right at the age when they are beginning to make choices about their future.”

“The possibilities for partnering with park user groups and businesses in Anchorage are endless. People want to be involved with meaningful employment for teens,” said Anchorage Park Foundation Chair Victor Mollozzi.

Youth who participated in the pilot summer reported gaining problem solving, teamwork, communication, leadership, and critical thinking skills in addition to work experience, friends and knowledge of the parks and the environment.

Jonathan Graves, a YEP crew member from Highland Tech High School, said that during the program, teens get to “learn about the environment, spend time outside, and do things that make me feel my opinion is validated.”

Several of last year’s program participants have applied to work in the YEP program again. YEP will hire six Assistant Crew Leaders (youth ages 17-20) to encourage youth to continue to build their leadership skills while providing support to the program.

Applications for the 44 Youth Crew Member positions (ages 16-18) are due April 25 and applications for the six Assistant Crew Leader positions are due April 18. Position descriptions and applications for both positions are available online at <http://www.ayea.org/yep.html>. Assistant Crew Leaders start late May and the YEP program kicks off June 2.

For information about the 2007 summer accomplishments see:

http://www.anchorageparkfoundation.org/projects_archive/2007YouthEmploymentInParks.htm

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