Northwest Youth Corps
Report on 2018 Sound To Summit

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Founded in 1984, Northwest Youth Corps is a regional conservation corps which provides youth and young adults with outdoor education, job-training, and employment, to help them be successful in life.

Overview
Northwest Youth Corps’ (NYC) Sound to Summit (S2S) program is designed to strengthen the Tacoma, WA community by engaging youth ages 15-18 in five weeks of education and stewardship. Through the completion of challenging projects, members earn their first paychecks, gain valuable skills in natural resources management, meet potential employers, and experience real-world success as professionals and in life.

In 2018, a total of 18 youth (nine per session) served with Metro Parks Tacoma and Mt. Rainier National Park in a program that ran from June 18 -July 20, and then again from July 30-August 31.

- 18 Tacoma youth served
- 2,289 service hours in 10+ Metro Parks
- 2.85 miles of Tacoma hiking trails built or maintained
- 14 acres of invasive plants and noxious weeds removed from Metro Parks Tacoma
- 200 Metro Park Tacoma trees cared for
- 4.42 miles of hiking trails built or maintained at Mt. Rainier NP

Education
Teens devoted 15 hours each to learning about their surrounding environment, and discovered the importance of effective environmental stewardship.

Topics included Leave No Trace; Empathy, Equity, and Diversity; American Sign Language; Cultural Awareness; Teamwork; Ecology; Map Reading; Cover Letters, Resume Writing; Interviewing; Active Listening; Forest Succession; Plant Identification; Carrying Capacity; Watersheds; Fire-Building; and Knots.
Program Format
One goal of Sound to Summit is to broaden horizons and introduce teens to working and playing in the great outdoors. 18 Tacoma-area youth enrolled in the program, more than double the number of youth from 2017.

In an expansion from the single Mt. Rainier weekend in 2017, the program offered two, service, education, and recreation experiences at the Park, where crews improved trails while enjoying week-long camping trips. Participants also learned to set up tents and prepare outdoor meals among sweeping views of subalpine wildflower meadows, ancient forests, and wildlife.

As relayed in a great article, “Teenagers Pour Sweat, Love Into Mount Rainier’s Trails” (http://www.chronline.com/teenagers-pour-sweat-love-into-mount-rainier-s-trails/article_3223c6a8-b5eb-11e8-a7dd-5fadf001a5c7.html),

“On the Lakes Trail, past gravel and drainage packed and dug by the Sound to Summit students, the youth made cracks about who was the worst cook, claimed to not miss cell phone reception, and laughed about camping in the rain and hauling heavy loads up the trail... They didn’t realize before this job how much work goes into keeping a park and the natural areas that we do have.”

- Dani-Mae, Sound to Summit crewleader

Sounds To Summit supports Metro Parks Tacoma’s mission of creating healthy opportunities for people to play, learn and grow.
Supporting Innovation

*Sound to Summit* is an innovative part of NYC’s 35-year history. Unlike other NYC programs—which have occurred either in a national forest setting or in an urban area—*Sound to Summit* is the first to combine both urban and rural experiences. S2S provides opportunities for Pierce County teens to experience two different and unique park systems, and to learn about the connections between them.

Grant funding covered expenses like youth stipends, the salaries of two professional crew leaders, vehicle and related expenses, and items such as food for the camping trip.

**Funding for Sound to Summit:**
- Metro Parks Tacoma $20,000
- Dawkins Charitable Trust $20,000
- Mt. Rainier National Park $17,250

This year, Metro Parks Tacoma expanded its funding and facilitating role, provided office space for NYC staff and a daily meeting area for the *Sound to Summit* crews, and published a press release in partnership with NYC.

NYC provided tools, vehicles, food, and project coordination, and publicized S2S through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and NYC’s eNews. (Image below, a member of S2S uses a Pulaski in Mt. Rainier National Park. Photo credit: Jared Wenzelburger, jwenzelburger@chronline.com)

“It’s hard work, and most of the kids said it was their first summer job...Most kids don’t get an opportunity like this...Most kids spend their summer hanging out and playing video games.”

- Zander, S2S corpsmember, From *Teenagers Pour Sweat, Love Into Mount Rainier’s Trails*

NYC is honored to cooperate with the National Park Service to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation in the Puget Sound region.
Building Community Capacity
S2S is made possible by Metro Parks Tacoma, Mt. Rainier National Park; the Tacoma School District, Joint Base Lewis-McChord Recreation and Morale Directorate, Pierce County Boys and Girls Club, and 2nd Cycle Tacoma’s Community Cycle Center coming together to create opportunities for youth.

“We at Metro Parks are happy last year’s pilot program proved to be so successful that S2S is back,” said Andrea Smith, president of the Metro Parks Board of Commissioners. “It’s a wonderful opportunity for young people to explore the potential of environmental stewardship.”

Tracy Swartout, Mount Rainier National Park’s deputy superintendent, said park officials were pleased to partner with Metro Parks and Northwest Youth Corps on S2S because it provides valuable skills development and work experience for young people.

“This program comes as we begin the National Park Service’s second century of service and seek to connect new audiences to National Parks and other protected places around the United States. There’s no better way to connect with a National Park or Metro Parks than to have served as a steward of the resource yourself.

We hope that this program provides participants with the basis for a lifelong connection to our nation’s systems of parks, whether local or national. It is in service to our parks and protected spaces that we build stewardship for their future.”

- Tracy Swartout

Moving forward, Northwest Youth Corps aims to expand the reach of Sound to Summit. Through expanded partnerships in the region, we can engage in new conservation and ecology projects to give more youth the opportunity to learn, grow, and experience success through connection to outdoor space and impactful service.

For more information about how you can support Sound to Summit, please contact Jeremy Taitano, NYC Washington State Programs Manager Jeremyt@nwyouthcorps and (253) 260-4152. Thank you!