



# the greenway

## Climbing To New Heights

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# Message from the President

LIDIA SOTO-HARMON, PRESIDENT AND CEO



**AS OUR NATION MOVES FORWARD FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION,** I would like to take a moment to reflect on how the Student Conservation Association has remained steadfast during times of transition by continuing its critical work of nurturing tomorrow's conservation leaders while safeguarding our cherished public spaces.

Every day, our staff and crew members make a tangible difference in the world around us. From preserving national parks to protecting urban green spaces, our efforts are shaping a more sustainable future while transforming lives. With your enduring support, we can keep igniting a spark in passionate individuals dedicated to protecting our planet.

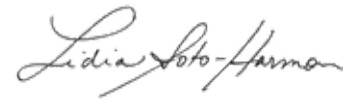
Although our partnerships with federal agencies may evolve in the coming months and years, we remain inspired by the growing community of dedicated supporters like you who make our mission possible.

For 67 years, the SCA has been at the forefront of conservation and maintained momentum in addressing challenges head-on while activating young leaders. Today, our mission is more critical than ever as we navigate a world facing an urgent environmental crisis.

This issue of *The Greenway* will transport you to Acadia National Park in Maine, where our program participants are helping combat erosion and preserve local plant life. It also spotlights our work in Marfa, Texas, where a dedicated SCA intern is assisting with protecting Hispanic history at the newly dedicated Blackwell School Historic Site. You will also learn more about an SCA alum making strides in conservation and our other stellar work projects.

We know you share our commitment to preserving and protecting our cherished national treasures. Your generosity is the lifeline that fuels our work by safeguarding vital ecosystems and habitats for years to come. It will also nurture the next generation of conservationists who drive positive change.

From all of us at the SCA, we wish you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season. Thank you for all you do.



## On the cover

New York City Urban Green crew members at Acadia National Park in Maine.

PHOTO: SHAUN CROCKETT/  
THE BEARDED MAINER



Tongass National Forest, AK



## Tongass National Forest

### JUNEAU, ALASKA

For the second successful summer, the SCA Alaska Roving Team worked alongside staff from the Tongass National Forest and the City of Wrangell in Alaska, maintaining high-use zones throughout the region. Crew members improved city trails and recreation facilities while participating in professional development and on-the-ground training. The team also conducted corridor brushing, cabin maintenance and restored 13 miles of trail to become more accessible for people with disabilities.

## Springfield Armory

### SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

The SCA Maintenance Action Team increased their preservation skills at the Springfield Armory National Historic Site in Massachusetts. The team removed, repaired, and reglazed windows at the historic Byers Street Gatehouse and painted part of the Iron Boundary Fence. Through this experience, program participants learn an array of technical skills, including cemetery and headstone restoration, carpentry, column repair and other exterior structure repair.



## Cleveland, Ohio

This summer, the SCA's Urban Green program participants in Cleveland joined Mayor Justin Bibb and USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Homer Wilkes to kick off the Community Forestry Corps Program, designed to reduce urban heat islands in underserved communities. Crew members assisted with heat mapping and planting trees to help increase the city's tree canopy, ultimately reducing the ever-increasing temperatures in areas with an abundance of buildings, sidewalks and roads.



PHOTO: ZARIA JOHNSON/IDEASTREAM PUBLIC MEDIA



# Making A Mark In Maine

## Urban Green Crew Tackles Erosion At Acadia National Park

**THIS SUMMER, THE SCA'S 2024 ACADIAN EXPLORATION CREW FROM NEW YORK CITY COMPLETED A SPECIAL MISSION.**

They made the trek from the Big Apple to Acadia National Park in Maine to help preserve local plant life and combat erosion caused by decades of trampling by parkgoers. A popular destination for its spectacular views, it is also vulnerable to extreme weather events, including increased rain and snow.

Joined by SCA President & CEO Lidia Soto-Harmon, the crew carried 209 pounds of soil to the summit of Sargent Mountain, the park's second-highest peak at 1,040 feet above sea level. Each hiker carried five to 25 pounds of sterilized soil up the mountain. The four-mile hike along steep terrain took around four hours to complete.

"I enjoy doing difficult things and am glad I got to do it," said SCA crew leader Angel Barrott, 21. "Being on top of Sargent Mountain, I see why this is needed. It's a beautiful view, and the mountain will benefit from having more greenery on top. I feel good being a part of it and want to see it in the future when it's all done."

Barrott first joined the SCA as a crew member while a sophomore at Cardinal Hayes High School in Bronx, New York. Barrott was recruited by the SCA's New York City Director, John Donovan, who gave a presentation at the school.

Now a senior studying mechanical engineering at SUNY Delhi in upstate New York, Barrott credits the SCA for instilling a love for the outdoors and helping him become more outgoing.

"It sounded like a good chance to get outside more. I grew to enjoy being outdoors and working with the tools. I prefer to work with my hands, and building is something I want to do with my life," said Barrott, who evolved from an SCA crew member to crew leader. "Before the SCA, after track ended, most of my summers were spent indoors. If I didn't have a reason to go outside, I wouldn't. My first SCA assignment was at a park that was really close to my house, and I had no reason not to go."

This summer, five crew members and three field leaders were selected from the 2024 New York City Urban Green Program to embark on a 12-day regional deployment to Acadia National Park that included conservation projects, community events and outdoor recreation. For many of the crew members, this was their first experience camping, which allowed them to develop newfound skills, including pitching a tent, lighting a campfire, cooking outdoors and making s'mores.

“I have learned that we are responsible for our environmental impact as individuals and as a society.”

SCA CREW LEADER JAEEL WOOD



• BY THE NUMBERS •



**209**

pounds of soil  
carried to the peak  
of Sargent Mountain



**2**

miles of carriage  
roads brushed



**50**

feet of bog walk  
foundation constructed  
and installed



**80**

feet of rustic  
fence repaired

The SCA began expanding its first-time outdoor recreation adventures by curating crews designed to provide Urban Green program participants with unique excursions that expose them to new experiences while building equitable access to nature for Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and other underrepresented community members.

Similar crew experiences to learn and serve this year included Urban Green crew members from Atlanta and Houston traveling to Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming and crew members from the San Francisco Bay area traveling to Joshua Tree National Park in Southern California.

In addition to bringing soil to the summit, the crew assisted with several much-needed projects at Acadia, including partnering with the Acadia Youth Conservation Corps to build a section of a bog walk along the Great Notch Trail. They also teamed up with the Friends of Acadia to repair a severely damaged 80-foot rustic fence impacting a natural area. The crew even got to meet with park superintendent Kevin Schneider, who previously worked with the SCA at North Cascades National Park in Washington before joining the Park Service.

Just as the crew positively impacted Acadia National Park's trails and natural landscape, the park had an equally substantial impact on the crew members.

"I learned to push myself out of my comfort zone, hike and work outside. Now, I know I am able to do hard things, and I can keep pushing myself. You're tired, but it was satisfying," said SCA crew leader Jael Wood, 23, of Bronx, New York. "The first night at the campsite, we hiked to the beach and saw a couple of shooting stars. [The trip] was a good balance. We had service projects throughout the week, and then we could explore the area on the weekends. As a group, we really got to bond."

Wood joined the SCA as a crew member following freshman year at Stephen T. Mather Building Arts & Craftsmanship High School in Manhattan, New York, which partners with the National Park Service to specialize in hands-on skills training for building and landscaping trades with an emphasis on high-quality craftsmanship and historic preservation. Working with the SCA has developed a desire to become more sustainable and teach others how to help protect the planet, Wood said.

"I have learned that we are responsible for our environmental impact as individuals and as a society. Every time I see nature, I see how fragile it is," said Wood, who was studying writing and literature at Borough Manhattan Community College before transferring to the City University of New York. "I learned to be more mindful to help mitigate waste. What I learn I like to tell my friends who will listen. I want to thank our donors for their support and for allowing the younger generation to experience nature and enjoy it so they can help protect it. The SCA has a lifelong impact."





# Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

IN SEPTEMBER, SECRETARY HAALAND AND DIRECTOR SAMS TRAVELED TO MARFA, TEXAS, TO CELEBRATE THE START OF NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH (Sept. 15 – Oct. 15) for the National Park Service ceremony establishing the Blackwell School as a National Historic Site.

When Victoria Villarreal began her SCA internship there, she never imagined having the opportunity to give a personal tour of the schoolhouse this fall to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and National Park Service Director Chuck Sams.

“That was something,” Villarreal said. “Having that space to speak with them and answer their questions was really special. It was great to see how engaged they were, asking questions of me and the staff and really listening to the story we had to tell about Blackwell.”

## An American Story

Having opened in 1909, the Blackwell School was the sole public K-8 school for the city’s Hispanic students. Segregated by prejudice rather than law until 1965, the school had limited resources and strict rules.

“The Blackwell School ties into the history of Civil Rights in America and amplifies that history in the Southwest,” said David Larson, superintendent of the Blackwell School National Historic Site.

Students at Blackwell were forbidden from speaking Spanish and were hit with a wooden paddle if they defied teachers. Despite these hardships, they excelled academically.

“A lot of the students that attended Blackwell were at the same level as their Anglo peers when they transferred to high school.



Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland and SCA intern Victoria Villarreal

PHOTO: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Their level of education was the same or even better,” Villarreal said. “Despite the lack of resources, there was resilience.”

## Lasting Impact

Partners at the national and local level came together to give Blackwell its well-earned distinction as a National Historic Site.

“At the local level, the Blackwell School Alliance has been working to preserve the site for the last two decades,” Larson said. “During the (establishment) ceremony, it was recognized by Park Service leadership that this is a rare group of people that stood up to protect this story.”

Villarreal remembers an interview with Blackwell School alum Jessi Silva, who expressed her relief at feeling the burden of a forgotten history lifted off her shoulders.

“For the longest time, she felt hurt about the whole experience,” Villarreal said. “But when she saw all the work that was being done by the Blackwell School Alliance and partners in the NPS, she felt seen, she felt represented. It was just beautiful to hear that.”

## Time Is Running Out to DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Donate by December 31 and your gift will be MATCHED by a generous group of donors to make twice the difference for young SCA members and the public lands we’re working hard to protect.

Make your gift today at [thesca.org/match24](https://thesca.org/match24)

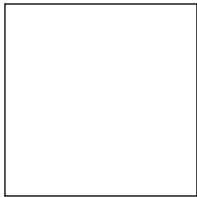




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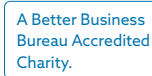
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The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is the largest provider of hands-on environmental conservation programs for youth and young adults whose lives are transformed while they protect and restore natural and cultural resources across the country. Founded in 1957, the SCA is committed to building the next generation of conservation leaders dedicated to the lifelong protection of the environment and the communities we serve.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

# Kelly Graner

PHOTOS: KELLY GRANER

## A Journey Fueled By Service

**SCA ALUM KELLY GRANER ACHIEVED AN EXTRAORDINARY FEAT:** completing the Triple Crown of Hiking. This prestigious accomplishment involves hiking the Appalachian Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail, and the Continental Divide Trail — a total of 7,875 miles across 22 states.

Graner's journey to the top began in 2017 while a crew member with the SCA New Hampshire Corps, which ignited a passion for the outdoors and instilled a deep appreciation for conservation.

“I had a 10-month position that really changed my life,” Graner said. “We lived in cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps — no heat or electricity. Going from living comfortably to (that) ... changed my values.”

Over the next few years, Graner continued to serve with the SCA, leading conservation crews across the country while pushing her physical and mental limits.

Driven by a desire to test her boundaries, Graner embarked on her Triple Crown quest, hiking each trail solo over three years. Graner credits her time with the SCA for equipping her with the necessary skills, confidence and perseverance.

“Honestly, the SCA transformed my life in ways I never would have imagined,” Graner said. “I wish it were a requirement for youth to serve ... just getting out there and learning a different way of life.”

Acknowledging the trek was an undertaking, Graner encourages others not to feel intimidated.

“The hiking is cool and all, but I always like to tell people that at the end of the day, it's just walking,” Graner said. “As long as you can walk, you can figure it out.”

Make your gift today at [thesca.org/donate](https://thesca.org/donate)