



**April 1, 2011**

***Celebrating 25 Years!!***



*Damien Morando, Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy*

***1. When were you in the Corps and for how long?***

I was in the Corps from 2002 until 2008. I was in a few different Corps programs. I was in the Backcountry Program in 2004; I worked on Catalina Island with the Invasive Plant Removal Program; and I worked as a supervisor at the SEA Lab in Redondo Beach from 2006 to 2008. Catalina Island was great; we removed invasive plants using herbicides, hand tools, volunteers and a lot of mapping – G.I.S. and satellite maps were heavily involved.

For me, the most helpful program was the Backcountry Program because it allowed me to develop a passion for what I now feel is my calling. It introduced me to a field that I wanted a career in and enjoyed sharing with others. It was hard work though. You have to get up in the morning and hike 10 – 15 miles every day. But the work was very gratifying; at the end of the day you know people will be using the trails you worked on and feel you've accomplished something that will be there for a few years. The experience allowed me to continue on that career-path with my current job.

***2. Please tell us about your life now, both professionally and personally.***

I work at the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy. I do some trail work, but I mainly do invasive plant removal which I learned from working on Catalina and for the SEA Lab. We also work to plant a lot of native species along the coast. If we're not doing plant removal we're usually checking on sites or doing maintenance work. I love my work. On weekends I actually volunteer with them and do trail work. We manage a number of nature preserves and our sites are really unique.

I try to work full time but can't because I'm also going to school. Next semester may actually be my last semester at Citrus College in Glendora for my certificate in Wildland Resources and Forestry. This fall they're going to try to make it into an Associates Degree so I may pursue that afterwards.

On my free time, I get out of the city as much as I can. I'm not in Angeles Forest as much as I thought I would be, instead I'm on the road. I go to Utah, Arizona and up the coast to the National Parks.

***3. How did the Corps influence who you are and what you are doing currently?***

I had gone to Viejo Island with the CCC for a bit and really enjoyed it but things happened that forced me to come home. When things improved at home I was referred to the LA Corps. After working with the

Corps for awhile I found out that they too offered a Backcountry Program – similar to the one I had done with CCC. I applied for Backcountry my first year but wasn't selected. When that happened I thought to myself, I'll stick around for another year to reapply and if I get rejected again I'll leave. The next year, I applied again and got selected. When you come back from Backcountry you become an Assistant Crew Leader, so I did that for awhile and then I worked as a supervisor at SEA Lab. I was still a corpsmember but worked as a driver and an acting supervisor. Then the Corps started up its Catalina program and was looking for people to go. I found out about it the day before the deadline and applied the same day. So I've pretty much took up any opportunity that involved going out and traveling.

The Corps influenced me by giving me the opportunity to do what I was already interested in. A lot of times you hear people talk about what they want to do when they grow up but they never end up doing it. The Corps allowed me to do what I'm passionate about.

#### ***4. Is there anything particularly memorable about the Corps that you would like to share?***

Backcountry was the biggest part of my experience and I hope to get involved with it again someday – even if it's just as the cook. I still remember how amazing it felt to complete a huge hike and sit at our destination and just have an orange.

#### **Farewell Keisha!**



This week the Corps bids farewell to our Junior Case Manager, Keisha Ciego. Keisha has a long history with the Corps. She began here as a Clean & Green member when she was only 13 years old and continued on assisting payroll, accounts payable, and the after school program. She then began an internship with the case management department which led to her role as a Case Manager. Throughout her time with the Corps, Keisha was always a dedicated and hard worker who took advantage of all the opportunities presented to her. Keisha, the Corps will miss you and we wish you good luck on your journey ahead!

#### **Efforts to Outcomes (ETO)**

On Thursday, Mona Khalil, Quality Assurance Coordinator, led a national webinar that highlighted the LA Conservation Corps' Programs and Structure in ETO, with an emphasis on our Young Adult Corps program. This informative webinar had approximately 95 attendees on the call from organizations nationwide. Mona explained our data and reporting framework of programs and answered questions from participants. The webinar will be available on Monday, and you can watch it [here](#).

#### **SEA Lab**

This week corpsmembers worked at Ballona Wetlands in partnership with Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation. Corpsmembers learned how to identify California native plants; and how to collect seed for propagating of native plants at SEA Lab's native plant nursery.



*Elizabeth McCallister looks for viable seed to collect*



*Stanley Taylor collecting seeds*

### **Young Adult Corps**

On Saturday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, volunteers from Starbucks joined 300 student and community volunteers for the Cesar Chavez Day of Service at Eastmont Intermediate School in Montebello. Representatives from the school, the City Council, the Cesar Chavez Foundation and sponsor Bimbo Bakeries kicked off the event with a ceremonial tree planting and volunteers spread out across the campus to plant 35 trees in addition to landscaping the front of the school and quad area with flowers and shrubs. Corpsmembers demonstrated how to properly plant a tree and helped supervise all of the volunteers. Carlos Campero from ELA did an outstanding job putting the project together and the principal (and Eastmont alum), Juan Herrera, was very pleased with the results.



*Corpsmembers demonstrate how to properly plant and water trees*



*Volunteers and corpsmembers finish planting the last 5 trees*

Corpsmembers from the ELA center worked at a feverish pace in order to complete this years deliverable outcomes for the Community Development Block Grant. This week alone corpsmembers and Staff cut open 155 new tree wells. We worked in collaboration with the City of LA Urban Forestry Division and Bureau of Engineering to ensure quality inspected and approved outcomes. Corpsmembers cut and removed over 60 tons of concrete and made room for 155 new trees. Special thanks and kudos to Supervisor Jeff Davis, Steve Anderson, Michael Luong, and Timothy Bonilla for their diligence and efforts.



*Supervisor Jeff Davis, Johnny Mendez, Michael Haywood, Fernando Huerta*



*Supervisor Michael Luong, Brandon Markham, Andy Diaz, Latoya Collins, Antonio Saucedo*

Corpsmembers in the Water Efficiency Job Training Program continued working at the El Cariso Smart Garden this week. This demonstration garden shows off many water efficient features such as a bio-swale, native and climate appropriate plants, a compost center and a solar-powered irrigation system. On Thursday, the crew was filmed for a 30 second Current Cause video callout competition commemorating

Earth Day 2011 for Current TV. It turned out the sound engineer went through the Corps' Afterschool Program!



*Corpsmembers measuring and creating a pathway*



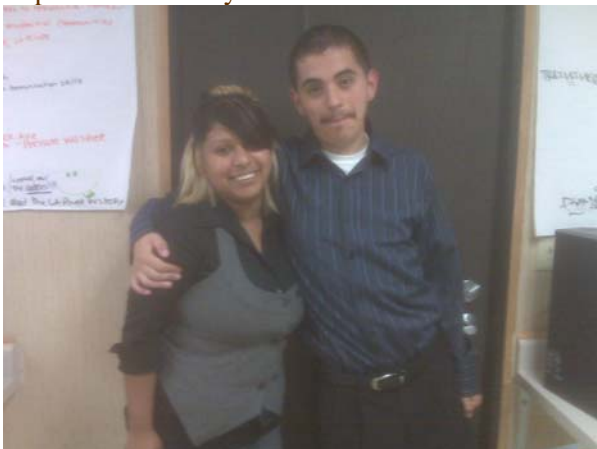
*The production crew filming corpsmember, Louis Blunt, as he works on decomposed granite area*

### **RACLA**

This weekend our Recycling Crews will be out at LA Dodger Stadium collecting bottles and cans from first home stand of the season scheduled to take place May 31<sup>st</sup>-April 3<sup>rd</sup>

### **Corpsmember Development**

This Thursday, members of the Transition Program attended a hiring event at the Downey YMCA. Corpsmembers Xiomara Jimenez and Francisco Flores interviewed with a staffing agency for positions with various warehouses and customer service companies. The agency was very impressed with Francisco's CalTrans experience and told Xiomara that her experience with the Corps was very impressive and they could tell that she would be able to handle a variety of physically demanding jobs.



*Corpsmembers Xiomara Jimenez and Francisco Flores*

### **Los Angeles Education Corps**

On Thursday, March 31, 2011, The Los Angeles Education Corps (HQ High) celebrated Cesar Chavez Day. Students read a brief biography on Cesar Chavez and then worked in groups to study his quotes and share their findings. Students elaborated on what they thought these quotes meant and presented their written responses to their instructor. Overall, students received an interesting history lesson on Cesar Chavez, his impact on our country and why people should remember him.

### **Peace Corps Career Fair**

On Friday, March 25th, the Peace Corps' office of Returned Peace Corps Volunteer's (RPCV) held their 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Career Fair at the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce. This is the second time that the Peace Corps has held a job-recruitment fair in the Los Angeles area. It was an opportunity for agencies to promote their organization, job opportunities, and to connect with strong candidates. Rick Stroup, Division Director of Corpsmember Development, and RPCV, Mona Khalil, were invited to represent the Corps as 1 of the 15 employers at the fair.