LA CONSERVATION CORPS

GRATITUDE REPORT

2016/17
Dear Friends of the Corps,

What is it that makes up a family?

At our Annual Luncheon last spring, Diana Van de Kamp took to the stage to speak about her late father and Founding Board member of the LA Conservation Corps, John Van de Kamp. She shared how strongly he believed in the Corps and the Corpsmembers. She noted that what she learned from him was that the Corps “provides another family for kids who need it most when they need it most.”

That is truly our hope. We believe that everyone can thrive if they have a place to belong. It is our goal to be that place – that family – for any young person who comes through our doors ready to make a change and willing to work hard to make it happen. Every member of our team strives to let each Corpsmember know that this is where they belong, and that they will have all the support they need here if they just ask.

We wouldn’t be able to come through on our promise to Corpsmembers if it weren’t for you. Your encouragement, your financial support, your connections, and your time have been there when we needed it. So that makes you family!

Who better to call family than this committed group of business people, artisans, tradesman, educators, politicians, lawyers, engineers, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, community organizers, and more from every walk of life throughout the city? New partners often ask what makes the Corps special. It’s all of you and all of us. It’s the people who have given decades of their lives to the Corps and the Corpsmembers and the mission to improve the quality of life in Los Angeles.

Corpsmember Cristian Cerenil wanted us to tell you, “Living in the City of LA, it gives me greater satisfaction knowing that my work efforts are paying off where I live.” We agree, Cristian.

As we look back, we are so proud of what this family accomplished in the last year. And Corpsmember Irana Garcia gave us some sound advice for the year to come, “I have learned that you have to be smart and try new things, to not be scared to do something new.”

As we look ahead we are energized by the new challenges that await us, and the new ways we can keep giving back to Los Angeles. If we always remember to put Corpsmembers first, like John Van de Kamp believed, then we can’t go wrong.

Thank you for being a part of the family.

Sincerely,

Wendy A. Butts
Chief Executive Officer

Jimmie Cho
Board Chair

Wendy A. Butts
Chief Executive Officer
LA CONSERVATION PROJECTS
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Last year, the Corps announced The Cornerstone of the Community Campaign to renovate the interior of our building in Northeast Los Angeles, create a new space for Corpsmember training, support services, and administrative offices, and provide greater financial sustainability for the Corps in the years to come.

This year we will celebrate by renaming this space the John Van de Kamp Center in honor of our late Founding Board Member. John knew about and supported the plans for this move. We hope that it will, in perpetuity, serve as a place that he would have been proud to call home for the Corpsmembers he so admired.

John was a shining example of a life of public service and mentor to so many at the Corps. He kept us focused on best serving the young people who come to us for a second chance at a high school education and a good job. He applauded hard work and diligent study, and he believed in giving a helping hand when needed. The new John Van de Kamp Center will embody these ideals.
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: Carlos Lopez

Carlos Lopez hails from South Los Angeles, and lives a stone’s throw from our South Los Angeles site. While Carlos grew up near our South LA location, his journey to the Corps actually began when he was attending college and needed to make an important decision for the welfare of his family.

While working with his father in the garment industry, Carlos was attending Cal State Northridge studying to be a Robotic Engineer. Unfortunately, his father was deported and without the extra income, his mother struggled to make ends meet for a family of seven. Being the oldest of his siblings, Carlos was faced with a decision – should he continue his studies or put his education on hold to help support the family? He decided to leave school and start looking for a job.

Searching for employment proved to be very difficult due to Carlos’ lack of experience. Door after door was closed in his face while his family’s financial situation became grimmer by the day. That is until he passed by the LA Conservation Corps and saw that they were recruiting young people. Upon finding out that experience was not a requirement, Carlos applied and was accepted into the program.

During his time here, Carlos amassed many accomplishments and experiences that fed his appetite for knowledge. He worked on sidewalk demolition and repair projects, planted trees, graduated from our Brownfields Job Training program, joined our YouthBuild team to build homes for veterans, and much more. Carlos also credits the Corps with showing him the importance of having a strong work ethic. Upon reflection, he said, “My supervisors taught me to work hard and to never say that I can’t do something. I couldn’t have made it this far without their advice.”

Thanks to the incredible training and transition services you made possible, Carlos is now a Cone Penetrometer System (CPT) Helper at Fugro – the world’s largest integrator of geotechnical, survey, subsea and geosciences services. In his role, Carlos assists with collecting geological data to ensure the soil is stable enough to be built upon, checks for contamination, and identifies how well the soil can withstand earthquakes. When asked how the Corps changed his life, Carlos said, “I was able to get out of my comfort zone and be a leader. It taught me to always give 1000% to my work because no matter what I do, it will always be my work, and I am able to say, ‘I worked on that’ and be proud of it.”
My name is Tyren Cryton, and I am one of the Corpsmembers who worked on the Wiseburn Walking Path project funded by the Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Natural Resources Agency, and Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District.

Over the course of this two-year project, I, along with fellow Corpsmembers, built a three-quarter mile-long walking path to provide Wiseburn residents with a place where they could walk, exercise, or hang out with their neighbors. We worked very hard on this project on hot (like, really hot), cold, and even slightly rainy days. Some of the things we did included demolishing and removing more than 200 tons of asphalt, concrete and debris, using 1 million pounds of decomposed granite to lay the actual walking path, installing 8 pieces of outdoor exercise equipment, building 5 concrete seating nodes, creating 7 turnouts for maintenance access, and planting 125 trees and 3,000 drought-tolerant plants.

Because community members had been waiting for this outdoor fitness area for a long time, they actively engaged with us during construction -- stopping by to thank us or to check in on how the project was coming along. Most importantly, though, this project meant a lot to me and my crew. We felt good because we were building something that the community was excited to use, but this project also made is feel good because we were able to see what we were capable of.

I discovered passions that I didn’t even know that I had! I never thought I’d be doing work such as concrete finishing, tree planting, and using heavy machinery. I was horrible at using hand tools and not using them the correct way. But now, my views about myself have changed. Now, I can’t see myself doing another type of work.
Enduring partnerships are the key to the Corps’ three decades of success in changing lives and transforming communities. Last year we embarked on a new partnership with Citi Foundation that has been transformative for our Green Career Pathways program and for our Corpsmembers.

The Corps is very grateful to have been awarded a Youth Workforce Fund grant through Citi’s Pathway to Progress initiative two years in a row. This grant provides youth both in the U.S. and around the world with training and access to jobs, including paid apprenticeships and internships. In partnership with America’s Promise Alliance, the fund awards $250,000 grants to 15 nonprofit organizations across the U.S. to expand their programming to offer a range of employment opportunities in areas including environmental sustainability to robotics and culinary arts to coding.

This funding has provided access to specialized training, professional development, and transition services to Corpsmembers on our five Green Career Pathways – Construction, Energy, Land Management, Manufacturing, and Zero Waste. This in-depth support has led to over 75% of Corpsmembers leaving the Corps with a career-track job. Thank you Citi Foundation for your belief in the power of our Corpsmembers and their futures!

Corpsmembers earned vocational training certificate
LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM

Last year, Corpsmember Michael Barrera asked his Corps Case Manager if there was any help he could get to clear up three citations on his record. Because he could not afford the fines he was unable to get a driver’s license. Michael was understandably nervous about going to court alone. His Case Manager told him to attend an upcoming legal clinic the Corps was hosting where he met with a Fellow from the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA). The Fellow assessed his situation and enrolled him in the HEART Homeless Court Citation program run by the office of the City Attorney of Los Angeles, Mike Feuer. Instead of paying fines that would have been a severe hardship, Michael was able to complete 12 hours of community service and attend personal development workshops to clear his citations. Now, Michael is studying to take his exam and hopes to have a driver’s license in the next three months. His strong work ethic and determination caught the attention of a partner agency, and he has started an internship with California State Parks.

This is just one example of the meaningful work being done by our legal services program which provides Corpsmembers with legal education and representation, access to legal clinics and diversion programs, and financial support in clearing fines. Spearheaded by longtime Corps Board member, Helenann Hirsch, the program marshals the resources of amazing partners like LAFLA, the City Attorney’s office, the HEART program, the Public Defender’s office, the LA Department of Transportation’s Community Assistance Parking Program, Metro Transit Court, Metropolitan Courthouse, Sylmar Juvenile Courthouse, LA:RISE Legal Services, and the Neighborhood Justice Program.

With the support of these allies, Corpsmembers are able to eliminate minor traffic citations, warrants, quality of life citations, and other fines while substantially improving their ability to obtain a driver’s license and better employment opportunities. In the last year, with help from this dedicated group, 290 Corpsmembers received legal education and 130 tickets were addressed. Corpsmembers performed 500 community service hours, and 40 Corpsmembers were able to earn their driver’s licenses.
EMPLOYER BREAKFAST HIGHLIGHT

Summer 2017 marked the completion of the first full year of our Green Career Pathways program which is helping Corpsmembers focus on their goals for their time in the Corps and the careers they want to pursue when they leave us. To celebrate, our Green Career Pathways Advisory Board hosted current and prospective employer partners for a festive breakfast last June at the newly opened LA State Historic Park.

The Green Career Pathways Advisory Board has 14 members who represent various industries, companies, staffing agencies, workforce development organizations, and the City of Los Angeles. The Board helps program staff identify trainings in each pathway, developed a list of core competencies for Corpsmembers, and connect Corpsmembers to meaningful jobs after the Corps. At the breakfast representatives from private, public, and nonprofit organizations who have hired Corpsmembers or are thinking about it heard about the successes in our first year and the plans for the future.

Thank you to our Advisory Board members and all of our employer partners for believing in our Corpsmembers and sharing your time, talent, and treasure with the Corps!

29,234
Linear feet of trails built or maintained
Statement of Activities
Year Ended June 30, 2017

Revenue and Support
General Agencies & Contracts $18,077,876
Contributions - Private & Corporations $1,939,913
Program Fees $149,107
In-Kind Revenue $191,154
Contributions - Individuals $215,467
Other Income (loss) $(11,404)
Investment Income $464
Total Revenue $20,562,577

Expenses
Program Services $13,793,442
General and Administrative $3,080,132
Fundraising $137,703
Total Expenses $20,341,773

Net Assets
Net Assets - Beginning of Fiscal Year $6,719,218
Change in Net Assets $220,804
Net Assets - End of Fiscal Year $6,940,022
California Attorney General Xavier Becerra took that message one step further in his Keynote Address by promising Corpsmembers that they will always have a place in that community and a stake in those partnerships. “We’ve got your back,” he told them. “We want you to know that we believe in you because we know what you’re going through, but more than that it’s what you will get to do.”

Honoree Mike Burke, CEO of global engineering firm AECOM, spoke about the importance of partnerships between the for profit and nonprofit worlds and the parallels he sees between his company and the Corps. “The LA Conservation Corps is truly building a better community, building a better Los Angeles, and contributing to building a better world.”

That was an important message for a Corpsmember alum like Javier Rodriguez who received a rousing round of applause when he shared with the audience that he would soon be receiving his bachelor’s degree from UCLA and had already been accepted into the master’s degree program of his choice.

In May 2017, hundreds of friends and family of the Corps gathered at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion for our Annual Spring Luncheon to celebrate the successes of our amazing Corpsmembers and to make big plans for the future.

Each of the event’s speakers shared a message of connection and the strength we all gain from working together toward common goals.

We want to thank all of our event sponsors, attendees, and speakers for motivating us all to keep reaching for our goals and keep supporting one another.
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Thank you to all our individual, corporate, foundation, and government partners who support Corpsmembers and our mission by funding our programs between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017. Your generosity helps make our work possible.

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In Memoriam

We remember John Van de Kamp, founding board member of the LA Conservation Corps. Mr. Van de Kamp served on our board for all of our 31 years. The Corps would not be where we are today without his guidance, passion and unending devotion to the organization and the young people we serve.

February 7, 1936 – March 14, 2017

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We’re grateful for the service of these board members who left the board in fiscal year 2017: Phil Recht and John Rego
Help us to continue transforming young lives and enhancing the Los Angeles community by investing in our mission today. Your support will enable us to positively impact more young lives whose efforts leave behind a legacy that we can all enjoy.