

[History of MPRB](#)[Mission & Vision](#)[Organizational Structure](#)[Commissioners](#)[Meeting Schedules](#)[Park Board Budget](#)[Code of Ordinances](#)[Comprehensive Plan](#)[Sustainability 2013](#)[News & Events](#)[Quick Facts](#)[MPRB FAQ](#)[Community Partners](#)[Commitment to Diversity](#)[Tobacco Use Policy](#)[Website Policy](#)[Contact Us](#)[Home](#) < [About MPRB](#)[Back to What's New Listing](#)**Wednesday, July 28, 2010**

### These summer jobs go beyond the paycheck

*MPRB's Teen Teamworks completes 25th year*

Remember when a typical summer job for kids in the Leave it to Beaver era was mowing the lawn? Fast forward to 2010 where today's teens install native plants in the Mississippi River, conduct neighborhood surveys and create nature play areas for younger kids.



The Teen Teamworks Mississippi River Green Teams worked at Powderhorn Park to install 100 flats of bulrushes to help stabilize the shoreline, prevent erosion, and contribute to wildlife habitat.

For 25 years, the **Teen Teamworks** program of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) has provided summer employment and educational programming for youth ages 14-18. Yet it's more than that. It's teens learning about responsibility, job readiness, and working as a team—with a few hundred dead carp thrown in to make it interesting.

Since Teen Teamworks started in 1986, over 7,000 Minneapolis teens have benefited from the program. Participating youth receive supervised on-the-job training from MPRB naturalists, gardeners and operations crews while doing their part to leave their own "green" footprint on the environment.

Teen Teamworks goes beyond the paycheck. Through the Minneapolis Public Schools, Teen Teamworks "Earn While You Learn" component is an Accredited Learning Center. Youth take classes in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), basic skills in reading, writing and math and Life Skills. They can earn up to one high school elective credit for successfully completing the program. Classes are held one day a week for three hours at North Community High School and Central Green Middle School. Earn While You Learn also provides the educational component for Minneapolis Employment and Training Programs STEP – UP younger youth.

Over 700 youth attend these classes each summer.

"Being in the Teen Teamworks program helped me a lot," said Lorreal Edwards. "I learned how to maintain a park while also gaining responsibility. Being in school, I also learned more math and reading."

With a 2010 budget of \$800,000, 280 youth are involved in the program this year. Each youth worker earns approximately \$2,500 during the summer. In addition to basic grounds maintenance in parks (removing trash, raking sand lots, pulling weeds, spreading wood chips, edging paths), other projects encompass:

**Carp Cleanup** – Heavy rain sent an estimated 500 carp over a storm barrier from Minnehaha Creek to Lake Nokomis in late June. When the water receded, the carp died. The fish were removed by brave, although slightly grossed-out, Teen Teamworks youth.

**Weeding and Planting** – The Mississippi River Green Team removed invasive species to make room for the native plants they installed at North Mississippi Regional Park. They also worked at Powderhorn Park to install 100 flats of bulrushes to help stabilize the shoreline, prevent erosion, and contribute to wildlife habitat.

**Trash Survey** – Teams worked with the City of Minneapolis Public Works Department to take a trash survey of neighborhoods as part of the City's environmental and sustainability initiatives.

**Garden Crew** – Youth worked with gardeners at J. D. River's Children's Garden to mentor youth about planting and taking care of gardens.

**Bike Ambassadors** – Youth take part in the bike education component of Safety Camp and help out with bike checks and bike rodeos at neighborhood events.

**Sustainability Initiatives** – Teen Teamworks exemplifies MPRB's commitment to sustainability. Workers reuse trash bags, compost organic materials and use reusable water bottles instead of paper.



Teen Teamworks Green Teams toured Target Field where they learned got a behind-the-scenes look at how the facility is conserving water, composting, recycling, and utilizing energy generated by the trash burner next door.

"During my two years with the Mississippi River Green Team, I learned a lot about the Mississippi River and its surroundings; like how native plants can purify water. With the invasive and non-native plants surrounding the natives, the water gets less purified," said Pashie Vang.

It's not all work, though. After all, these are kids and it is summer. This year the teens combined work with play on a visit to Target Field. They learned how the facility is conserving water, composting, recycling and utilizing energy generated by the trash burner next door.

Recreational opportunities are offered bi-weekly and can include movies, going out to eat and shopping for school supplies and clothes. Some crews get together and play basketball or have a picnic.

Youth are recruited from the ACHIEVE! of Mpls. Public High Schools, MPRB rec center directors, and STEP-UP, the City of Minneapolis youth summer employment program.

Teen Teamworks youth also have access to job opportunities and internships with partner organizations, such as Target Field, National Park Service, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) and the MPRB.

Funding and employment partners include MWMO, Minneapolis Employment and Training Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Funds, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Schools, the National Park Service and the General Mills Foundation.

Shawn Hockett, a maintenance crew leader, began working with Teen Teamworks in 1988 at age 14 and continued with the program until he was 18. "I was an at-risk youth who saw an opportunity. I hope that kids will be inspired to take advantage of opportunities in their life. Park Board is a great place to work."

***Attention Teen Teamworks Alumni!***

Please send us your best Teen Teamwork story or experience and the year(s) you participated. Send them to [teenteamworks@minneapolisparcs.org](mailto:teenteamworks@minneapolisparcs.org). We would love to hear from you and include the stories in our annual newsletter.

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