

The Green Team and the Restoration of Plaster Creek
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What is the Green Team?

The Green Team is an opportunity for urban youth to be outside and learn about the outdoors. This summer, 16 high school students worked alongside passionate educators and college students to learn about the restoration of their watershed. In West Michigan, the Plaster Creek watershed is the most polluted stream, and flows through Grand Rapids. Funded by an EPA grant, these high school students were paid to work on projects in the Plaster Creek Watershed, while also learning about topics such as stormwater runoff, pollution, and native plants. In addition to the Plaster Creek Green Team, there is a second Green Team in the Rogue River Watershed. The two Green Teams would often meet together to learn and work. The Green Teams had both a June and July session with four students in each.

What we do:

As college students, we served as mentors to help guide the Green Team students in a variety of ways. With our leader Gary Warners, a local middle school science teacher, we worked alongside these students. Our hope is for the high schoolers to grow with confidence in their understanding of pursuing college and its positive impact. It has been such a joy to get to know each Green Team member and to learn about their lives as we have shared from ours as well. We were able to encourage them in their future college plans and hopefully make college a less intimidating and more welcoming idea. Each session includes a day of classroom time to learn about our watershed and its problems, a meal with professionals discussing different careers in Biology, and a day of shadowing, where Calvin student researchers invited our students to learn about and help with their projects. The researchers spent the morning sharing about their college experiences, while students also learned about their various projects.

Reflections:

Micah:

It has been a really awesome experience to work with the green team this year. I have loved getting to know the high schoolers, and be able to learn about them and their lives. We have been able to do some really cool projects while also having a good time together. The two green

teams really bonded a lot this summer, and it was sad to finish each session. It has been a great summer!

Leira:

It is crazy to think the summer is almost over! I did not know what to expect going into this new job, but I was blown away by the amazing students I met, who came from a diverse set of backgrounds, and the great experiences we had along the way. At the end of each day, we would go home tired, but knowing we had made a difference with our work, and that is a priceless feeling. We not only helped with many projects around our local watershed, but also just had fun getting to know about each other. From conversations while transplanting in the greenhouse to adventures exploring Plaster Creek's pathways, I enjoyed getting to know the students and seeing what great ideas and dreams they have for their futures. It was really fulfilling to see the students discover a passion for looking after their own community. Water brings people together and brings life to things-I think these Green Teams embodied that this summer. Huge thanks to Micah and Gary for showing me the ropes this summer, and the awesome students who participated!