

NOVEMBER 2022

THE COURIER

FOREST SERVICE JOB CORPS CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CENTERS
Creating the Next Generation of Conservation Stewards



U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor leadership gathered to celebrate the expansion of CCC conservation trade offerings at Harpers Ferry Job Corps CCC on October 28, 2022. Dr. Homer Wilkes, U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment talks with Harpers Ferry Job Corps CCC Student Government Association leadership. U.S. Department of Labor photo by Jamie Turner.

"WHO ARE YOU?"



l-r: Stedman Graham, Stedman Graham Associates and Cyndi Szymanski, Chief of Staff, Job Corps National Office.

The recent National Job Corps Association/Center Director meeting in Washington, D.C. was filled with thought provoking sessions and positive support from the Department of Labor, United States Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service. There were discussions on how we can do our best to support our students. Stedman Graham's

training on "Identity Leadership" really resonated with me. He posed the question: "Who Are You?" and I quickly came up with a list: woman, mom, wife, Federal employee, supervisor and a few more nouns. But that wasn't at the heart of Graham's question. He was asking us to think about our values, how we make our decisions and how those answers can make us a leader. Graham's premise is: to be a

leader, you need to first know and lead yourself. The way we define ourselves influences how we show up in the world, how we interact with others, and how we internalize those interactions and in turn respond to external stimuli.

Graham chuckled that being Oprah Winfrey's partner means he must constantly remind himself of who he is as an individual and how he shows up in the world. He walked us through his Nine Step Success Process ©, demonstrating

"I INVITE YOU TO JOIN ME IN THIS CONVERSATION."
CYNDI SZYMANSKI

the building blocks for mastering personal leadership. He discussed how to find positivity through internal coaching, and ultimately be the leaders and change agents that we all can be.

After three difficult years, almost losing our Centers, sending students home due to COVID-19, and now working hard to rebuild our staff and student numbers, a mental reset is important. Graham's process resonated with me. To rebuild/maintain my positivity, I need to revisit my values and build on them to be the best mom, wife, employee, supervisor, and friend I can. I am going to read Graham's book and work through the questions and ideas he poses, challenging myself to reframe and rebuild my identity and leadership skills.

I invite you to join me in this conversation and journey. Are you interested in reading Graham's book and participating in a book club with me? If so, please let Brianna Larry know and we will order you a copy of this training resource. In January, I will convene a conversation to discuss the book and its ideas. I hope you take me up on the offer and explore how we each can develop our own personal leadership. I look forward to talking and learning from you all.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **At-a-glance:** Visit the [OC Editorial Calendar](#) for upcoming agency-wide communication activities.
- **TIWWA-Relationship Focused:** [Job Corps students participate in mentoring program on the Hiawatha](#)
- **Visit Us:** Job Corps National Office [SharePoint](#) site.



(center) Jacob Creek Job Corps student Michael Cruse helps clear a large round cutout on the Lewis and Clark Trail of the Nez-Perce/Clearwater National Forest. USDA Forest Service photo by Charles Pickett.

JACOBS CREEK JOB CORPS STUDENT FALLS IN LOVE WITH WILDERNESS TRAILS

Jacobs Creek Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center student Michael Cruse enrolled in Job Corps to earn his high school diploma after dropping out of school in the 10th grade. Little did he know that a summer internship would light a fire in him to pursue a career building trails on national forests. Cruse spent the 2022 summer field season in a Work-Based Learning (WBL) assignment on a Great America Outdoors Act (GAOA) Forest Service trail crew. He worked side-by-side with experienced Forest Service trail specialists tackling deferred maintenance trail projects in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

“Mike did not know what to expect or what he was getting into but he showed up with an open mind and a willingness to take whatever we threw at him. The work is challenging even for someone who's accustomed to it,” states GAOA Central Zone Trail Crew Lead Charles Pickett. “To come from a really different environment and push himself through that physical challenge was really huge. Since May there's a pretty noticeable difference in in Mike's physique and strength after pushing himself through that.”

Along with mastering traditional technical skills such as using a cross-cut saw and ax, the dynamics of making a trail sustainable, Cruse experienced some special great outdoors moments. “A moment that particularly stands out is when we did a double hitch with three days off in between,” he says. “On our days off, we went up a trail called Moose Creek. We would wake up next to the flowing creek and it would be kind of chilly but it was the most beautiful thing to see—the flowing creek against the rocks, the mountain fresh air.” Cruse would like to pursue a career in trail's stewardship. He's currently applying for GS-3 through GS-6 forestry technician positions for the spring 2023 season. Having earned a Public Land Corps certificate during his internship, he hopes that will give him a leg up landing that first career position with the Forest Service.

The mission of the 24 Forest Service Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers is to train eligible youth ages 16 to 24 with educational, social, and vocational skills while assisting in the conservation of the nation's public natural resources.

MEET DEREK SUKSTORF BOXELDER JOB CORPS CCC



Boxelder Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center Teacher Derek Sukstorf is a very busy man. His is officially Boxelder's math teacher, he's also the GED and robotics instructor, camp crew coordinator, back-up disability coordinator,

and department purchase card holder. On top of that, he's a husband, a father of 12- and 15-year-old daughters and is working on his Master's Degree in Education Administration. Whew! “A typical day for me is a bit like juggling 5 balls, while riding a bicycle, on a tight wire, tied between two moving vehicles,” says Sukstorf. “I strive to keep my focus on the classroom. Being available to my students is priority #1.”

Wanting more time with his family, Sukstorf left a 10-year career as an engineer in the oil and gas industry. Wanting to make a positive impact in the world, Sukstorf decided teaching provided him the best opportunity. His start date at Boxelder was July 15, 2017, after stumbling across a job ad. Sukstorf feels privileged to take his students out on activities such as camp crew, hiking in the summer to perform trail maintenance, or snow shoeing in the winter to mark trails. It is those life changing experiences that stay with his students: “I know that years after our students leave it will be those activities they remember, not the Algebra tests.”

Like most parents, Sukstorf's children keep him grounded: “Being a parent has taught me to be patient, compassionate, and caring; skills that have served me well. I appreciate all that my children have taught me, but I often wish that my daughters valued my advice as much as my students do!”



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More exciting news can be found on our [Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers!](#) website!

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