Eagle Eye Institute

Using the power of nature to transform urban youth.
Summer 2015 Highlights!

Eagle Eye had a busy summer engaging youth in Learn About programs, urban stewardship projects, and gardening activities. Tufts University Tisch Summer Fellow, Michelle Mu, and Northeastern Co-op Intern, Kristina Ferrara, joined Program Director, Susan Ekstrom, for a summer of learning, exploration, and fun with five youth organizations from Boston, Somerville, Medford, and Quincy.

Learn About Forests

In early July, we were joined by retired science teacher and naturalist, Charlie Saulnier, along with Somerville High School students from the Mystic Mural project to explore the Middlesex Fells. In the morning the group walked along Spot Pond and identified many native trees and wildflowers growing along the banks of the pond. After lunch we ventured to the Virginia Wood section of the Fells for a nature scavenger hunt led by Michelle and Kristina.

Learn About Agriculture

Eagle Eye was thrilled to join two groups at Powisset Farm for LAA programming. Mystic Learning Center Youth learned first hand what a day in the life of a farmer is like from Powisset Farm Manager, Meryl Latronica. During our visit, youth toured the fields, helped weed the green house and collected chickens. In July, Boston Chinatown youth, and youth worker, Arthur Grupee, joined us at Powisset for a day of hiking, catching butterflies and moths, and harvesting potatoes. Arthur was very impressed with the youth’s interest in the harvest and noted, “this is the first time I’ve seen them so willing to get their hands into [the soil] without any hesitation.”

Arnold Arboretum Visit

With our second Boston Chinatown Neighborhood group based out of Quincy we visited the Arnold Arboretum for a day full of tree identification, bird watching, and team building. Youth had an opportunity to watch a demonstration from arborists and were joined by ornithologist, Robin Hunnewell to learn about local birds and her work researching bird migration patterns in the gulf of Fundy.

Ravenswood Park Visit

In early August we traveled to Gloucester for our last Learn About of the summer with Boys and Girls Club. Youth enjoyed exploring the winding trails at Ravenswood while learning about animal camouflage, hugging trees, and holding a pickerel frog. Eagle Eye staff members and Trustees Educator, Catherine Shortliffe, were impressed with all youth participants during our closing circle as they listed every tree we learned during our hike!

Urban Stewardship

Many Eagle Eye participants also had a chance to give back to their community this summer through local urban stewardship projects. In addition to our weekly gardening program with Mystic Learning Center we had an opportunity to lead youth in a recycling and trash clean up along the banks of the Mystic River in July. In August we worked with the Medford Boys and Girls Club to complete a similar clean up along Medford’s stretch of the Mystic River.
Thirty-eight friends of Eagle Eye Institute (EEI) gathered at Medford High School in Medford, Ma on Sunday October 25th for the thirteenth annual NATURE FOR EVERY YOUTH Hike-a-thon fundraiser. Participants included board members, staff, volunteers, friends, students from Medford high school Environmental club and The Healy Boys and Girls club staff and youth.

Some hikers have been part of the EEI family for more than 25 years (or “from the beginning,” as founder Anthony Sanchez said), and some were brand new to the organization.

After introductions, the group embarked on a 3-mile hike through the Middlesex Fells Reservation, led by Northeastern University Co-op Student, Kristina Ferrara and Board Member, Chris Cato. Morning rain gave way to clear skies during the hike, and the group had excellent views of Boston and surrounding communities from Wright’s Tower hill as they enjoyed a gourmet sandwich lunch provided by long-time Eagle Eye sponsor Basil Tree Catering of Cambridge.

For the third consecutive year, Melinda Stockmann, former staff and currently a member of our board of advisors organized a hike in the San Francisco Bay Area on Sunday November 22 to help us reach our goal of $15,000 to be matched 1:1. Thank you Melinda!
Fells Day sends Medford High School students out into nature

For the past three years, Eagle Eye has successfully convened a partnership with Medford High School (MHS), MA Dept of Conservation and Recreation, EPA, Friends of the Middlesex Fells, US Forest Service and Tufts University to establish the Community, Conservation, & Education Partnership (CCEP) and provide innovative outdoor education and enrichment activities for the students of MHS. During this time, teachers and students have become acquainted with the Middlesex Fells and are now more comfortable using the Middlesex Fells, conveniently located in their backyard, as an outdoor classroom.

This past June over 800 Medford High School students headed outside for hands-on, out-of-class service learning experiences as part of the first annual Medford High School Fells Day coordinated by the CCEP partners and funded in part by the US Forest Service. Students and faculty were joined by community partners to plant trees, create trail markers, and remove invasive species and litter from the Fells and several local parks. Students also had an opportunity to hike the school’s recently named "Mustang Trail" and learn more about the flora and fauna found in the Fells from volunteers stationed along the trail.

John Perella, MHS Headmaster is committed to continuing the CCEP partnership and getting more of his teachers and students outside the classroom, into nature where they can learn and be active at the same time. Perella understands that there is something good about being in the woods; it calms people down and makes them feel good.

“I think the Fells Day project was a huge success. It got kids like me – who don’t really spend a lot of time in nature – to go out and interact with nature. My group and I planted two trees and three shrubs. It was really satisfying because now I consider them mine because I took part in giving them a new home.” ~ Tenzin Phunkang, MHS Junior

“It never crossed my mind that during a school day, I would be going out into my community and not only learning about my surroundings but embracing it as well. Many people believe that if you want to see a change, you have to be the change, and I believe that on this Fells Day, all of Medford High was that change!” ~ Rachel Garland, MHS Junior

Eagle Eye is an organization that is driven to make incremental changes in how young adults view and experience our environment. These amazing initiatives would not have come to pass without their support, guidance and leadership. We at MHS feel very fortunate to work with the dedicated professionals at Eagle Eye.

~John Perella, MHS Headmaster
Medford High School Work Continues

By Kristina Ferrara,
Northeastern Co-op Student

Environmental Science Classes at MHS
This fall, I was given the opportunity to work with Audrey Feitor, Environmental Science teacher at MHS, to provide outdoor education in the Fells that compliments the work being done in the classroom. We’ve been working on an ongoing project that has students determine overall forest health in a section of the Fells based off of a variety of criteria. So far, we have looked at species diversity, signs of diseases, and soil quality, while teaching tree identification, how to measure DBH, and soil testing techniques throughout the process.

Mustangs of the Fells
I was also able to join Charles Saulnier, from The Friends of the Fells and Nik Tower, a teacher at MHS in facilitating a new after school club at MHS called the “Mustangs of the Fells”. Our goal is to use the Fells as an outdoor classroom and a way to build new, positive experiences in nature. So far we have learned about native versus invasive species, tree identification, and vernal pools. We are currently working on a project using ArcGIS to map the location of vernal pools in the Fells with a plan of getting some officially certified! EEI is excited to see all of the great work these programs will continue to do in the future!
EAGLE Club Updates

For over three years, Eagle Eye has collaborated with the Somerville Boys & Club at the Healey School in Somerville. Inspired by Eagle Eye, Rob Fujiwara, the Healey Club Director is continuing the outdoor exploration program, now called the Rob Squad. Modeled after the EAGLE program the program provides outdoor exploration and leadership activities for youth, such as camping, hiking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing.

Eagle Eye looks forward to continuing our work with the Boys and Girls club by engaging the youth and their staff in an overnight Learn More About Forests environmental leadership and advocacy program at our forested site in Western Ma.

Fall Garden Club

I have been continuing to work with Mystic youth this fall in the community garden. We’ve planted garlic, prepared the garden for winter, and continued doing fun, hands-on lessons and activities! One of the most powerful was our lesson on climate change. We looked at a map of what Boston would look like if sea level rose ten feet due to the melting icecaps, finding that the majority of the city would be totally submerged. The immediate response of the youth was: “What can we do to stop this from happening?” To answer that question, we found our carbon footprints- how much Carbon Dioxide our choices create each year. By seeing how we are contributing to the problem, we were able to brainstorm ways to reduce our impact like recycling, turning off the lights when we aren’t using them, and riding our bikes more.

Summer Garden Club

This summer, I had the pleasure of joining EEI Program Manager, Susan Ekstrom, and Tisch Summer Fellow, Michelle Mu, in working with youth at the Mystic Learning Center’s Community Garden.

On Monday mornings, we worked together to plant, harvest, weed, and water the garden as well as play fun games and learn more about our environment through hands on activities and lesson plans. One of our favorites was learning the Water Cycle by playing different games with water and, of course, getting soaked!

By Kristina Ferrara, Northeastern Co-op Student

Mystic Learning Center Youth learning how compost works.

Healey Boys & Girls Club Continues EAGLE Club Activities

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Carbon Footprints
Thank you to our Staff and Interns

Kristina Ferrara
Northeastern Co-op Student

The most rewarding part of working with Eagle Eye has been seeing the desire to protect the environment grow within the youth participants. By building positive experiences in nature, young people’s perspectives change, and they no longer view nature as something separate from themselves, but as an integral part of us all. When we connect to the environment and are immersed in its beauty we strive further as a collective community to conserve. Programs like Eagle Eye play a large role in ensuring that our earth touches the heart and soul of young people now and for generations to come.

Michelle Mu
Tisch College Summer Fellow

This summer I had the privilege of exposing young people to the wonders and beauty of nature. I loved witnessing youth unleash their curiosity and withdraw their hesitance to learn about and explore the natural world around us. In helping them develop a passion for the environment, I was inspired to further pursue my interests in biology and helping others realize the importance and value of caring for nature. Eagle Eye’s mission is critical; retaining interest in and passion for the environment in urban youth is especially important during this period of climate change and other environmental consequences.

Antioch College Graduate Students

Earlier this year, four Antioch Environmental Studies graduate students designed and implemented a 10-lesson curriculum package titled, Urban Ecology Adventures in the School Yard.

Another part of their masters degree capstone project was to develop an evaluation tool to answer the question; "Does this curriculum package successfully forward the goals of EAGLE Club to be an exploratory, place-based program that increases the ecological knowledge of the participants."

Thank you to Emily Cherkin, Charlotte Brewer, Libbie Dobbs, and Marie DiBenedetto for their outstanding work developing, piloting and evaluating the curriculum at the Healey Boys & Girls Club in Somerville, Ma.

Join us in recognizing Eagle Eye Champions Christina Oliva and Susan Ekstrom for their commitment and service to Eagle Eye over the past three years.

Their dedication and vision in support of Eagle Eye has carried our mission to new heights and we celebrate their outstanding accomplishments of: redesigning our website, facilitation of the Community Conservation Education Partnership for the benefit of the Medford High School teachers and their students, bringing recycling to the Mystic housing development through youth advocacy and revitalizing a community garden with Mystic Learning Center youth that provides food for their neighborhood.

We wish them both well and look forward to them being part of our Eagle Eye community as they continue to develop their professional and personal lives.
Please help us reach our annual campaign goal of $60,000!

We have already raised $48,000.

Join us in raising the additional $12,000 to reach our goal this year!

Your donations are critical in supporting our work connecting urban youth with hands-on experiences in nature that build their awareness, develop their responsibility and cultivate their leadership.

Support Eagle Eye’s “Earth Advocates: Green Leaders for the Environment” Initiative

**Contribution Levels**

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