Eagle Eye Institute

Using the power of nature to transform urban youth

Eagle Eye Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering urban people from underserved communities, especially youth of color, to play an active role in caring for our environment.
What Eagle Eye Means to Me

Eli Kantrowitz is a junior at Ithaca College studying Outdoor Recreation. He was Eagle Eye’s Internship Coordinator June to August 2019.

Working at Eagle Eye provided me with an experience like no other. It was refreshing to be surrounded by a tight-knit community that worked together to complete a common goal. I had invaluable experience working hands-on with youth and peers.

Being able to use my hands everyday to improve the landscape and the lives around me was a humble way to live. I learned so much throughout the whole summer from communication and facilitation skills to masonry and carpentry skills. Eagle Eye is a place like no other. I felt that my voice was heard and together we were all filling a need for the community.

The impact that working at Eagle Eye has had on me is still evident today, as I continue to stay conscious of my resource consumption and food waste, as well as being able to effectively communicate to professors and peers. Beyond learning how to work youth and all the other skills I learned over the summer, I feel that I now have clearer intent with my life.

Offering opportunities for Holyoke young people to be immersed in nature

This year we served over 100 youth in hands-on outdoor programs at our forest site in the Berkshires and place-based programs in Holyoke. We worked closely with teachers and administrators at six schools and youth organizations to develop diverse programs to meet the needs of students, including Holyoke High Dean Campus, LightHouse Holyoke, Greater Holyoke Boys & Girls Club, Homework House, and Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School.

Our Berkshires programs offered opportunities for youth to be immersed, often for the first time, in the beauty and peace of a forest environment. From Winter Exploration on Snowshoes, to one-day Learn About Forests™, to three-day Learn More About Forests camping programs, to forest stewardship days, we engaged youth in all seasons in experiential learning, environmental awareness, stewardship, games, teambuilding, and reflection.

Nicolas, age 16, a Dean student, participated in a Learn More About Forests camping trip in May. “The best part of this program was sleeping in the tents at night because it was the first time for me. I think it’s important for young people to have experiences in nature because then they might actually find what they like.”
“Having teachers and students work together to cook and clean, to set up and break down camp, and to push through challenges and discomfort has deepened our sense of empathy and relationship. Learning how the land is stewarded by organizations like Eagle Eye has given more urgency and agency to our students’ growing sense of themselves as citizen leaders.”

–Dr. Stephen Mahoney, Executive Principal, Holyoke High School
EAGLE Club Connects High School Students to Nature in the City

IN 2018-19, EAGLE EYE and partner Kestrel Land Trust piloted the Earth Advocates, Green Leaders for the Environment (EAGLE) Program at Holyoke High Dean Campus. The purpose of the program is to connect students to opportunities for hands-on outdoor learning and stewardship in their local community.

With TerraCorps Community Engagement Coordinator Jack Sweeney-Taylor and Hampshire student Allie Foster, we coordinated biweekly after-school outings, monthly weekend programs, and an overnight camping trip.

We engaged a total of 62 students and 13 teachers in programs in Holyoke, the Pioneer Valley, and the Berkshires. Students practiced map-reading and plant identification at Mount Tom, planted trees for Arbor Day with DCR Greening the Gateway Cities Project, went walking at Ashley Reservoir, a source of drinking water in Holyoke and a public recreation area, and birding at a city park with two professionals from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

This year, we are expanding the EAGLE Program to reach more students, increase opportunities for leadership, and make the program sustainable in the long-term. We are working with 10 students who are excited to get out and connect with nature, each other, and the community.

On November 21, 2019, we co-hosted a farm-to-table dinner with Kestrel Land Trust and the Culinary Arts Program at Dean to raise funds for the EAGLE Program. EAGLE Club and Culinary Arts students helped run the event and prepare dinner with produce donated by local farms. Students, teachers, administrators, and the superintendent of Holyoke Public Schools attended and spoke. Read a poem shared by a staff, below.

Eagle Eye Experience
By Kayleigh Berger

Kayleigh Berger is an English Language Arts teacher at Dean who has participated in Eagle Eye programs with students.

Fresh-air,
Self-care.

Outdoor Education,
Fun exploration.

Advocates of the Earth
So much worth.

Green Leaders,
Green Eaters.

Connection and curiosity,
Reciprocity.

Culture and community,
Student-teacher unity.

Joy and laughter,
So much to get after.

Snowshoeing and hiking,
Endless liking.

Memories and Moments,
Bestowment.

Grateful, thankful, blessed,
Eagle Eye is the best!

Dean students explored Ashley Reservoir.
Summer Program Pilot with the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club

EAGLE EYE PARTNERED WITH the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club to pilot a series of four Learn About Forests™ programs for their Summer Transitions and Education Program (STEP), which serves Club members ages 11-14.

Over four weeks in July, Eagle Eye engaged a group of 13 youth in hands-on learning, nature awareness, and stewardship. Youth learned map reading, tree identification, and backcountry skills. Avian, 13, said, “It’s amazing. A few weeks ago I didn’t know any of this. Now I know that’s a maple! And that’s a hemlock!”

Guest instructors Ken Gooch, formerly of DCR, Lena Fletcher of UMass Amherst, and Marc Fortin of Zen Landscaping taught lessons on forest health, mindfulness, and stonework.

Eagle Eye and the Boys & Girls Club received a Department of Elementary & Secondary Education grant to fund the program.

Residential Summer Internship Program Engaged UMass Students

WE COORDINATED THE THIRD YEAR of our Residential Summer Internship Program. College students camped at our Berkshires site for six weeks, learned about sustainable living, developed land management skills, and helped coordinate our summer youth programs.

Madi McCarthy is a third-year Education & Psychology major at UMass Amherst. “This summer helped me realize I want to pursue a career in education, especially within an urban community.” The experience of living in an intentional community made an impact as well. “Cooking and eating good food, meditating daily, and having group check-ins helped me realize I can apply this to my lifestyle in college.”

Gabby Gracia is a third-year Natural Resource Conservation major at UMass. “I loved working at Eagle Eye. It is a unique experience that allows the interns and youth to connect with each other and nature in their own way.”
2018 ANNUAL REPORT

We met our program goals for 2018, engaging nearly 100 Holyoke young people in hands-on outdoor learning programs in the Berkshires, Pioneer Valley, and Holyoke. We engaged 20 staff from schools and youth organizations and 10 program volunteers, including guest instructors.

Programs & Partnerships

KESTREL LAND TRUST: We developed our partnership with Kestrel Land Trust, coordinating outdoor programs for Holyoke High Dean Campus students and piloting the Earth Advocates, Green Leaders for the Environment Program in fall 2018.

HOLYOEKE HIGH SCHOOL: We developed our partnership with Holyoke High School Dean Campus, leading three Learn More About Forests overnight programs in May, June, and September, and local outings through the EAGLE Program.

TEEN INTERNSHIP: Two Holyoke High Dean Campus students, Jorge Jimenez and Manny Salamanca, completed our weeklong Teen Internship in July.

RESIDENTIAL SUMMER INTERNSHIP: We coordinated the second year of our Residential Summer Internship program with three Hampshire College students and recent graduates. We hired Hampshire graduate Ryan Allmendinger as our Internship Coordinator.

STUDENT RESEARCH: Allie Foster, who completed our summer internship, did her Hampshire Division III research project at Eagle Eye, helping us design the EAGLE Program at Dean Campus.

OTHER PROGRAMS: We led a Winter Exploration program with Paulo Freire Social Justice Charter School in January, and a Learn About Forests™ and urban stewardship program with LightHouse Holyoke in April.

Events

EAGLE EYE FAMILY RETREAT: We led our annual Family Retreat July 14-15 and honored Jeff Fowler, a longtime member of the Eagle Eye community.

STONE WORKSHOP: Marc Fortin of Zen Landscaping led a Stone Workshop July 24-28. The summer interns and teen interns assisted with the project, which was continued in 2019.

Financials

• We met our fundraising goal for the 16th annual Hike-a-thon in October 2018. We raised $15,000, which was matched by two anonymous donors. Melinda Stockmann of San Francisco, CA led the 6th annual Mount Tam hike for Eagle Eye.

• We received a $5,000 grant from Kestrel Land Trust to hire Joe Jewett as our Youth Education Coordinator for the Dean Campus programs in 2017-18.

• We received a $15,000 grant from the Community Impact Fund for the second year, allowing us to coordinate our Residential Summer Internship Program.

• We raised $47,500 from individual donors and secured $27,000 in grants and $4,425 for in-kind services to meet our annual budget for 2018.
THANK YOU TO OUR 2018 DONORS!

Soaring Eagle
Maja Kietzke & Anthony Sanchez
Gail Strand
Anonymous Hike Match 1

Bald Eagle
Anonymous Hike Match 2

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Carol Wolfe

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Community Impact Fund
$15,000
Roy A. Hunt Foundation $5,000
Mass Cultural Council $3,800
Acacia Fund Boston
Foundation $3,000
Living Spring Foundation
$1,500

In-Kind Donors
Basil Tree Gourmet Catering
Chipotle Holyoke
D’Angelo’s Holyoke
Rocket Science Screen Printing

Thank you to our program volunteers!
Help us reach our annual fundraising goal of $85,000!

We have raised $75,000 towards our goal. Will you help us raise the remaining $10,000 by year end?

Your support is crucial to our work engaging urban youth in hands-on learning in nature that builds environmental awareness, develops responsibility, and cultivates leadership through stewardship of our natural resources.

Support Eagle Eye’s Youth Programs!

**Contribution Levels**

- Visionary Eagle $10,000
- Soaring Eagle $5,000
- Bald Eagle $2,500
- Golden Eagle $1,000
- Other: __________

Name: ___________________________
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(413) 655-0103

Or go to [www.eagleeyei.org](http://www.eagleeyei.org) and click Donate Now to make an instant PayPal donation.

What will you take with you?

“I’m going to use the meditation to calm my mind and body before basketball games.” –Dom, 13, Boys & Girls Club

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