The Great Outdoors
As Classroom:
Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures

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A program of:  In partnership with:

Wilderness Inquiry
National Park Service
Mississippi River Fund
OVERVIEW

• 10,000+ youth & families served annually
• Day-long canoe trips on the Mississippi River
• Overnight camping trips
• Integrated classroom curricula in schools
• Summer enrichment to prevent learning-loss & tighten the academic achievement gap
WHY is the UWCA Important?

- Youth are not connecting to the outdoors
Who is Served

- 10,000 youth annually
- 5\textsuperscript{th}–12\textsuperscript{th} grade
- Youth of color
- Recent immigrants
- High mobility
- Underperforming students
- Low-income
- Inexperienced with the outdoors
What Students Learn

- Natural & cultural history
- Water quality/stewardship
- Hands on science lessons
- Water safety
- Outdoor careers
Youth outdoors & engaged in learning

VIDEO
Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA)

Pyramid of Engagement

- **Output**
  - **Jobs**: 100 youth
  - Hundreds of new faces placed in outdoor jobs ranging from canoe guides to EPA scientists.

- **Output**
  - **Internships**: 250 youth
  - Participants define environmental education and career paths.

- **Output**
  - **Multi-day Experiences**: 500 youth
  - Urban youth are introduced to outdoor recreation and nature, which are proven to inspire life-long engagement in outdoor activities, healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship.

- **Output**
  - **Overnight Experiences**: 1,000+ youth
  - Participants solidify connection to nature. Interest in outdoor jobs and desire to “give back” begins.

- **Output**
  - **Introductory Outdoor Experiences**: 10,000+ youth
  - Young people gain confidence and independence. As fear of the outdoors decreases, interest, care and knowledge of the environment increases.

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- **Annual Participant Input**
  - Community Organizations
  - Families
  - Schools
  - Religious Groups
Introductory Outdoor Experiences
[ 10,000+ youth ]
Overnight Experiences
[ 1,000+ youth ]
Multi-day Experiences
[ 500+ youth ]
Internships [250+ youth]

- Participants define environmental education and career paths.
- Young people gain confidence and independence. As fear of the outdoors decreases, interest, care, and knowledge of the environment increases.
- Participants solidify connection to nature. Interest in outdoor jobs and desire to “give back” begins.
- Urban youth are introduced to outdoor recreation and nature, which are proven to inspire lifelong engagement in outdoor activities, healthy lifestyles, and environmental stewardship.
Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA)
Pyramid of Engagement

JOBS
[100 youth]

Hundreds of new faces placed in outdoor jobs ranging from canoe guides to EPA scientists.

Participants define environmental education and career paths.

Internships
[250 youth]

Participants solidify connection to nature. Interest in outdoor jobs and desire to “give back” begins.

Multi-day Experiences
[500 youth]

Urban youth are introduced to outdoor recreation and nature, which are proven to inspire life-long engagement in outdoor activities, healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship.

Overnight Experiences
[1,000+ youth]

Output

Introductory Outdoor Experiences
[10,000+ youth]

Output

Community Organizations
Families
Schools
Religious Groups

Annual Participant Input

Young people gain confidence and independence. As fear of the outdoors decreases, interest, care and knowledge of the environment increases.
UWCA Evaluation Highlights
## Evaluation Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Category</th>
<th>Student pre-trip survey</th>
<th>Student post-trip survey</th>
<th>MPS student records</th>
<th>Teacher survey</th>
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<td>Attitudes about science &amp; environment</td>
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<td>Teacher attitudes</td>
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</table>
Increased Interest in Science & Environment

Students’ Level of Interest in the Environment because of the UWCA Program

- Much More Interested: 22%
- Somewhat Interested: 16%
- Somewhat Less Interested: 7%
- Much Less Interested: 55%
From exposure to engagement

• Changed the way students felt about the Mississippi River
• 320 natural sightings, geologic formations, and people
• Students highly engaged
Students cited the UWCA as one of the best experiences in school.
Conclusions

• Reaching an underserved population
• Fostered greater interest in the Mississippi River, science, and the environment among young people
• Outdoor-based teaching heightens interest and encourages participation
• Environmental stewardship among students increases after their river experience
• Collaboration amplifies impact
• UWCA is replicable nationally
What makes the UWCA Successful?

- Key partnerships
- Innovative educational experiences easily integrated into classrooms
- Ability to serve large numbers of youth
- Long-term funding strategy
- Delivers measurable results
- Duplicable
A collaboration of Wilderness Inquiry, the National Park Service - Mississippi National River & Recreation Area, the Mississippi River Fund and many others, UWCA is designed to connect urban youth and families to the wilderness right in their own backyard.
UWCA Revenue Model

- Special Events: 20%
- Earned: 20%
- Corporate & Foundation: 22%
- In-Kind: 14%
- State & Federal: 15%
- Individual Donations: 9%
Unexpected Challenges

- Weather
- Challenges in working with schools
- Barriers from land management agencies
- Funding
Impact Story
THANK YOU!

• More information about the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures Program can be found at:

http://www.urbanwildernesscanoeadventures.org