

URBAN CORPS

OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY



2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Learning Earning Conserving



www.UrbanCorpsSD.org



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MISSION

The Urban Corps of San Diego County is a not-for-profit local conservation corps and charter school founded in 1989. Our mission is to provide young adults with a high school education combined with job training and community service in the fields of conservation and recycling, which assist youth in becoming more employable while protecting San Diego's natural resources and instilling the importance of community service.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The nationally recognized conservation corps model addresses disadvantaged young people's needs for education and job skills and also the broader community's needs for environmental and neighborhood improvements. Urban Corps' program model bundles a second chance high school education with paid job training, industry-recognized certifications, life skills coaching, support services, and college and career placement. Our Corpsmembers attend Urban Corps Charter School two days a week and participate in job training projects three days a week in the fields of community improvement, urban forestry, environmental services, recycling, and construction.

Some training projects bring inner city youth out into remote habitats around San Diego County to learn about and restore the local environment, but as an urban conservation corps, we also expand on the traditional "backcountry" focus of many conservation corps to include projects improving the physical and cultural environment of our cities. Whether they are painting out graffiti in City Heights or Barrio Logan, planting trees in Chula Vista, landscaping Poway Library, or keeping shorelines clean from Oceanside to Solana Beach, our trainees see that their work makes an immediate, visible difference in the community.

Youth earn a high school diploma at our onsite WASC-accredited charter high school offering an accelerated, needs-based, technology-rich academic structure and small class sizes. Services through our Corps-to-Career department include career and psychological counseling, case management, and one-on-one assistance with resumes, job and college applications, and job placement. After completing the program, youth are more employable, have the skills and confidence to succeed in the workforce, and know the importance of conservation and giving back.



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MESSAGE FROM CEO ROBERT CHÁVEZ



This year Urban Corps teamed up with Senator Ben Hueso of California's 40th Senate District to support tax credits for employers who hire high-risk youth who have been convicted of a crime and who have completed a work readiness program like ours. We were proud to have both current and former Corpsmembers share their experiences in forums from San Diego to Sacramento.

"I remember job searching after getting out of rehab and how pounding the pavement would take a toll on me, both physically and mentally. I was becoming drained of all hope....At this point I was ready to work, ready to give back, and be a productive member of society. My soul was screaming, 'give me a second chance and I'll show you.' But the felony on my record haunted me. Then I got the call from the Urban Corps... Urban Corps has been a heaven sent program. They have given me an opportunity to prove my willingness to work, learn skills and get a high school diploma. The negative snowball effect in my life turned positive. All of this happened because someone believed in me and gave me a job."

~Eliseo Nunez

At Urban Corps— as well as at our sister conservation corps up and down the State of California—we believe in second chances. This past year Urban Corps reengaged over 400 disconnected young adults in our workforce development program and graduated 177 with a high school diploma.

Young people come to us with a variety of backgrounds and employment challenges, including young parenthood, previous incarceration, court and gang involvement, family and drug issues, homelessness, lack of English proficiency, or poor self-esteem and social skills. These might be youth who lack direction or an opportunity to make money and advance themselves. A growing number are refugees from war-torn countries who are learning English and seeking a chance to build a future in America.

No matter the individual circumstances, those that make the leap and take advantage of this life-changing program are better for it. It might be the steady process of learning to become responsible, wake up early, show up on time, and work hard. Corpsmembers learn to keep their word, respect themselves, and respect others. For some, the opportunity to work in the environment and give back to the community opens their eyes to a future in civic and social responsibility. But it's that pivotal moment when they walk across the stage to receive their high school diploma or when they get the call about the job, these are the moments to remember.

For many of these young people, one of the last hurdles is entry into the workforce. We experience first-hand the barriers they face as our staff work to place them in living wage jobs after they graduate from the program. As they near graduation, our caring teachers and support staff arrange mock interviews, schedule behind-the-wheel driving tests, and work with youth one-on-one to complete resumes, cover letters, and job and college applications. We are proud that 85% of this year's graduating class transitioned with a job and/or college enrollment.

Now and into the future, Urban Corps will remain committed to building opportunities for our youth to rise above their past. We could not do it without our generous donors, sponsors, and project partners. Thank you for your believing in our mission. We appreciate your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Chavez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Chávez, CEO

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



OLD POWAY PARK GETS A FACELIFT

Urban Corps completed a construction project at Old Poway Train Park Poway in partnership with the City of Poway which helped youth learn a variety of new skills. Corpsmembers rehabilitated many amenities in this historic park including replacement of the existing railroad water tower tank and railroad ties, construction of new fencing and concrete pathways, and upgrades within many of the historic buildings including light fixtures and windows, and concrete slab flooring construction.

URBAN CORPS CHARTER RECEIVES SIX-YEAR WASC ACCREDITATION

Urban Corps Charter School announced that it received Six-Year WASC Accreditation Status. WASC Commissioners determined UCCS meets criteria for accreditation after a lengthy review process based on a self-study report and a satisfactory completion of an on-site accreditation visit. Throughout the 6-year accreditation cycle, UCCS will be expected to address its schoolwide action plan and demonstrate evidence of student achievement and improvement.

VISITING CORPS HELP CLEAN UP TIRES IN THE TJ RIVER VALLEY

In late June, Urban Corps teamed up with the Long Beach Conservation Corps, Los Angeles Conservation Corps and Orange County Conservation Corps to stage a two-day cooperative waste tire clean-up event in the Tijuana River Valley made possible by CalRecycle. Thirty corpsmembers from the four Corps joined forces to collectively round up an estimated 1,700 waste tires from the region, many of which were under heavy sediment. California exports around two million tires annually to Baja California, but a large portion of them are dumped in the watershed and return to the state after rain events, posing a threat to habitat and health.



CORPSMEMBER ADVISORY BOARD (CAB) KICKS INTO GEAR

A Corpsmember Advisory Board, or CAB, was formed in the Spring of 2016 as the representative body of our Corpsmember community. The purpose of the CAB is to provide Corpsmembers with self-government and to facilitate reconciliation techniques, communication skills, problem-solving and appropriate self-expression. The CAB provides an avenue of communication between Corpsmembers, staff, and administration. So far the group has been targeting a number of topics including Corpsmember uniforms, voter registration, and planning Corpsmember Appreciation Day. Future goals include participation in community events, recreational trips, fundraising, and recruitment services.



MT. HELIX FENCE JOB CHALLENGES CREW

Urban Corps completed a challenging job for the San Diego River Conservancy installing 1,200 linear feet of chain link fence atop a steep slope on Mt. Helix. From the start, the steep slope and rocky terrain challenged the crew to invent ways to address workplace needs and safety concerns. Crews ingeniously devised a pulley system to haul cement and water up and down the hill. This improved efficiency and safety. We consulted a biological team regarding use of machinery and power tools, as this would affect bird nesting season. As a result, the majority of equipment used was hand tools in order to prevent noise pollution.

ROOFTOP GARDEN ATTRACTS ATTENTION

Urban Corps' rooftop garden is a thriving thing of beauty these days thanks to a recent revitalization effort and little patient labor and caring attention. The garden is a favorite tour stop along the Recycling Department's Green Features campus tours. Be sure to stop by for a peaceful moment amongst the plants next time you visit Urban Corps!



EL NIÑO RAINS PROMPT SD BAY CLEAN-UP & SANDBAG GIVEAWAYS



With heavy rains in early 2016, a great deal of large item debris washed up along San Diego Bay. In response, Urban Corps partnered with the Port of San Diego to provide waste removal from Sweetwater Marsh Wildlife Refuge in National City, leveraging CalRecycle funding to removal of large quantities of debris. In total we removed and recycled over 118 waste tires, 120 cubic yards of weathered creosote wood poles, and 179 cubic yards of railroad ties, beams, plywood, plastics, and maritime debris. Urban Corps also participated in two sandbag giveaway events with members of the San Diego City Council. An event with Councilmember Scott Sherman saw a line of 300+ cars waiting for sandbags at Qualcomm Stadium. Over 5,000 sandbags were distributed. Additionally we delivered sandbags to elderly and disabled beach area residents for Councilmember Lori Zapf.

CITY HEIGHTS MURAL GETS FACELIFT

Urban Corps helped refresh the “Peace on Earth” mural at Home Ave. and Fairmount in City Heights by power washing in advance and applying graffiti coat to the finished product. Thanks to artists Gloria Murial and Laurie Carlock, the community members who helped make it happen, and our partner, installed natives Price Charities for helping us be a part of this wonderful project!



CHICANO PARK PROJECT WINS SDAPA AWARD

Urban Corps accepted a San Diego American Planning Assoc. award in May for its Chicano Park Project in partnership with the City of San Diego. The project was honored for its exemplary public outreach campaign and going above and beyond to listen to multiple voices in the community. Urban Corps hosted numerous workshops and meetings to bring stakeholders together throughout the planning process with numerous decision-making variables, from the custom design of the play equipment to bringing in original park artists for input. The Chicano Park Steering Committee remained vigorously involved throughout the project. This resulted in improvements which were true to the park's culture, style and artistic heritage.



TRANSFORMING CORONADO CAYS LANDSCAPING

Urban Corps wrapped up one of its largest landscaping projects to date this year at the Coronado Cays. The City of Coronado contracted with us to transform 12 medians from turf to drought tolerant xeriscaping within the Coronado Cays community. The project included the installation of irrigation, 8,500 drought tolerant plants, 12,000 sq. ft. of weed barrier, and 40 tons of cobble. Youth learned a variety of landscaping skills as they planted natives and installed irrigation, operated heavy equipment such as a Bobcat, and laid down mulch, bender board edging, and cobble set in decomposed granite.

E-WASTE DROP-OFF, EVENTS, & FUNDRAISING

Urban Corps now offers free electronic waste drop-off at our Midway area headquarters, The Solana Center, and the Qualcomm Buyback Center, and hosts E-Waste drop-off events with schools and non-profits. Schools and non-profits can host their own E-Waste fundraising events with a portion of proceeds being returned to the group.

RECORD BRUSH REMOVAL

Urban Corps removed a record 1.5 million square feet of brush in the month of May 2016 to create defensible space through its Fire Fuel Reduction program in partnership with the Viejas Fire Department. Funding was provided by a grant from the Cooperative Fire Program of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, Pacific Southwest Region, through the California Fire Safe Council.



URBAN CORPS 2015-2016 IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

177

youth ages 18-26 earned a
high school diploma

114 earned
certifications and licenses

26%
of grads enrolled
in college

75%
graduation rate
among seniors

1,373
trees planted

80%
of grads placed
in jobs

1.7 million pounds
of litter removed from public right-of-ways

593,372 sq. ft.
of graffiti removed

29
acres of natural
habitats restored

540,000 lbs.
CRV recyclables collected

10,400
volunteer
hours
contributed

7,619,000
sq. ft. of fire fuel cleared

97,415
lbs. of E-Waste
collected and recycled

\$3,498,470
Outside funding sources brought
into San Diego region for job
training and conservation projects

5,549
waste tires
collected and recycled
from public spaces



Graduate Tyea Whitson shows off her scholarship presented by Urban Corps Charter School Board Members Diane Chalmers, Ingrid Nielsen and Karen Ludwig.

CORPSMEMBER DIVERSITY

Urban Corps values its ability to provide a quality education to a diverse student body. In a 2013 qualitative study, 67% of program graduates reported that *Corpsmember Diversity* positively impacted their growth and performance. Our school has implemented a variety of top-notch web-based programs for English Language Learner's to support vocabulary acquisition, grammar, listening, reading, phonics, and interactive classroom instruction. Meanwhile North American-born students see broad benefit from working and learning alongside youth with diverse world backgrounds and experiences.

Gender

- Male—64%
- Female—36%

Students by Race

- Hispanic or Latino—40.60%
- Black or African—32.40%
- White/Middle Eastern—21.80%
- Asian—4.70%
- Other/Pacific Islander—0.50%

Primary First Languages

- English
- Arabic
- Spanish
- French
- Burmese
- Farsi (Persian)
- Kurdish
- Somali

FINANCIALS

Urban Corps' combined budgets from both programmatic operations and Urban Corps Charter School represent a total of \$12.6 mil toward student job training, education and development activities.

(Charter School financials remain separate and are not represented in charts below.)

Urban Corps of San Diego County Audited Financial Highlights

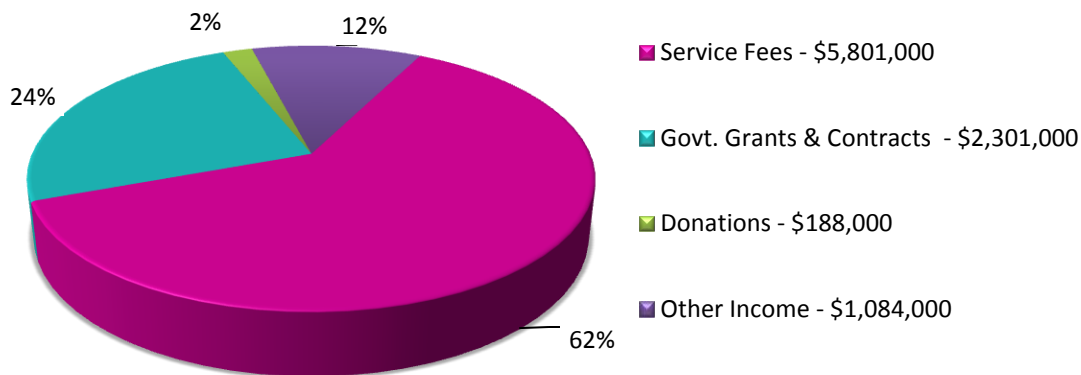
- Total Contributions & Revenue: \$9,364,000
- Total Operating Expenses: \$9,048,000
- Net Increase in Assets: \$316,000
- Ending Net Total Assets: \$8,720,000

Urban Corps Charter School (A Sister Agency)

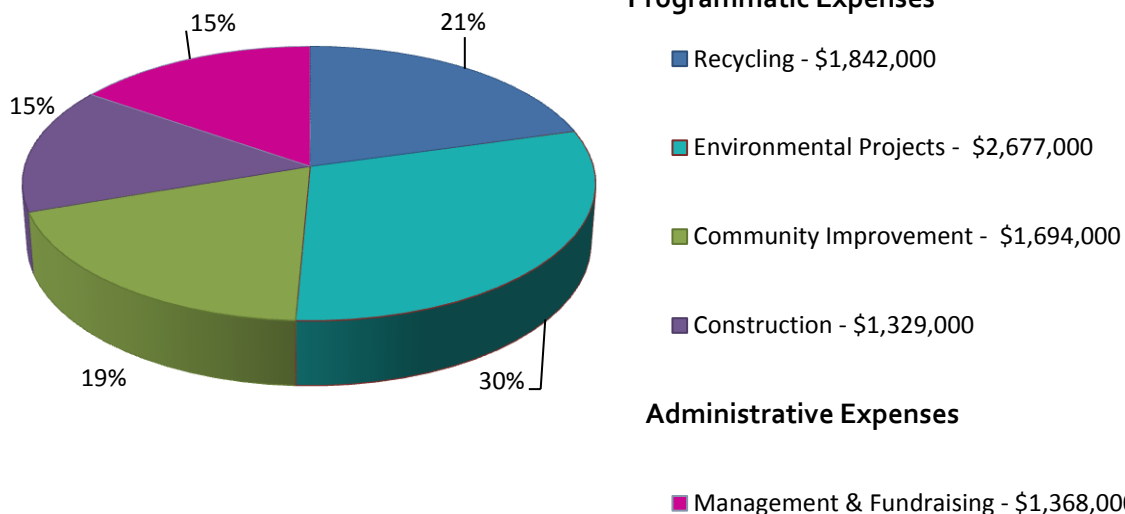
- FY16: \$3,200,000
- Proposed FY17: \$3,000,000

The state of California funds Urban Corps Charter School based on student attendance, also known as Average Daily Attendance (ADA).

2015-2016 Revenue



2015-2016 Expenses



Programmatic Expenses

- Recycling - \$1,842,000
- Environmental Projects - \$2,677,000
- Community Improvement - \$1,694,000
- Construction - \$1,329,000

Administrative Expenses

- Management & Fundraising - \$1,368,000

85 cents of every dollar goes towards programs.

GRATITUDE TO OUR FUNDERS AND DONORS

\$100-\$499

Bob Benson
Cellular Recycler
Diane Chalmers
Cara Chisolm
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Development Corp.
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\$10,000-\$100,000

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Unified Port of San Diego
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Western Chapter ISA
Whalen & Assoc.

GRAD STORIES



"I wasn't focused on school at all. I was in high school for the entertainment. I would always hang out while I should have been doing work or studying. I ended up getting pulled out of the school and put into charter school. I tried to adapt to the charter school life, but after a while I just started to fall off the wagon. School was never for me from the start. I found out about Urban Corps when I was 18. It's a very helpful organization that helps people that didn't get a high school diploma be able to bounce back and earn it...a great place if you ask me. It's a perfect opportunity to re-trace your negative steps in life and focus your mind a little more. I had to prioritize my life and Urban Corps has allowed me to do that. I used to slack off a lot, but at this point in my life, I know I have to stay focused. Slacking is no longer an option...you have to be strong and ride it out through all of the tough times."

~Khayri Brown

"I was always labeled as the class clown...I began to hang out with the wrong crowd, I began to drink, and drinking led me to go out every weekend and party. I thought nothing could go wrong. I began to experiment with drugs. I guess you could say that was my rock bottom. I was another statistic, another high school dropout, and I know that killed my family on the inside. I was depressed; nothing gave me excitement, not drugs, not women, and not beer. In the back of my head, there was always the thought of completing my education. It took me losing my job and having no sort of income to realize that I don't want to be jumping from job to job, not making enough money to even live off of. With a whole year wasted, the only good thing that came from it was finding Urban Corps. Not only am I enrolled as a student, I am also in the process of building up my resume being out in the field, whether it's planting trees or cleaning up a city, I am that much closer to expanding my job skills and work ethic. Even though I've had struggles, I've learned from my mistakes and I have become a better person. All I see in my future is success from here on, and there's nothing that can stop me."

~Alejandro Garcia

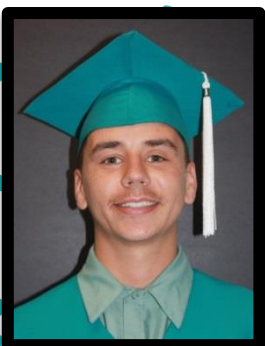


"The reason I didn't finish high school is because I wanted to rebel. I didn't like people telling me what to do. Sooner or later in tenth grade I got locked up. Once on probation, I had to attend school and get passing grades. For a while, I was on top of it, but then I started losing motivation and getting tired of school. I hated waking up in the morning so I would stay home. I just didn't want to be bothered by any teachers or any academic work. I would rather be in the streets doing what I wanted. I had a mentor who would try to push me, I had multiple teachers who cared more than I did and just wanted to see me walk across the stage. I made the wrong decision. If I could go back and do it again, I would...I should have started Urban Corps a long time ago. The thing I did want to do was work. Unfortunately you cannot get a job without a diploma.... Luckily, Urban Corps covers both; you can get your diploma while also working to make money. I am glad that I started this program and I hope that this can help me get lots of opportunities and be successful how I know I can be. I just messed up in the early years and now I'm fixing them so that I can move on. I believe that it's never too late, and I had to start somewhere. It's better late than never."

~Carolyn McDavid

"I was six years old when I started school in Mosul, Iraq. I did not finish because of the conflict in Iraq. When the war started, I remember watching the television and seeing the explosives in Baghdad. Then, two bombs went off in our city. One of the bombs went off before I went to school. It tore down our kitchen door. After that we knew we had to leave Iraq because we were no longer safe. In 2010, we relocated to Lebanon. In Lebanon, we made wallets and books for a living. I was very young when I started my first job. I wanted to help my family. I did not go to school and I was paid a low rate but I learned how to work hard. In 2012, we came to America. We were sponsored by the U.N. We relocated to El Cajon. I learned about Urban Corps through a friend and started in 2013. I worked in a crew that cleaned PETCO Park and Qualcomm Stadium. We cleaned the stadiums and sorted recyclables. My best experience has been attending school at Urban Corps. I have developed my English skills with the help of my teachers and volunteer Grandmas. Because of them and because of the support from my family, I am going to graduate after three years of waking up early in the morning, studying and working hard. I am not going to forget my best teachers who worked hard to teach us how to speak English and be good at school. I just want to thank them for all their help. I am so proud of myself. Now I can go to college and study what I like and apply for any job that I want."

~Muna Basaka



"I was raised in a broken home. My parents divorced when I was four years old because my mom was in a horrible car accident which caused her to lose memory. I struggled. It was hard to go to school and function like a regular kid. Some of the biggest problems were getting to school on time, finishing homework, and studying. When I got into high school, I was moving around from place to place. It really confused me and made me unstable. I started doing poorly. I didn't care about my grades. I snuck out late, and got in trouble with the law. I was always in getting into fights, talking back to my teachers. I simply did not think of the consequences of my actions. All of these things made it hard for me to graduate. By the time I turned 18 I went to jail for the first time and when I turned 20 I went to jail again. I was feeling really down on myself until one day my friend introduced me to Urban Corps. I've really been taking it seriously this time around, as this program is training me to be on time every day, to act professionally in the workplace, and to work well with others. After I achieve my goal of getting my high school diploma, I hope to get a good paying job and go on to pursue higher education and change my life for the better."

~Timothy Lynch