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## National Park Service and YMCA DC Launching Summer Camp

*Play, Learn, Work, Serve Camp will connect inner-city youth to the outdoors*

[WASHINGTON, DC, May 28, 2015] – The National Park Service and the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington are launching a joint program that will provide memorable and meaningful experiences for youth on public lands this summer. The Play, Learn, Serve, Work Summer Camp Program is part of the Department of the Interior’s 50 Cities Initiative to increase awareness, support and participation in outdoor programs. Here in DC, inner-city youth living in at-risk southeast and northeast neighborhoods will be active and inspired through an innovative education and stewardship program. The 4-week program, starting July 6<sup>th</sup>, will include trips to the National Mall, Fort DuPont Park, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens and Great Falls Park.

“This collaboration unites the resources and expertise of two organizations that are committed to youth engagement and development,” said National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “It will help thousands of children to ‘[Find Your Park](#)’ – magnificent places where they can play, learn, serve, and work outdoors. This type of personal contact with nature provides benefits physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.”

Through this partnership, National Park Service sites and Ys in nine cities will leverage their resources to expand the reach of both organizations this summer. They will create joint recreational, educational and service programs that emphasize the value and significance of resources in their communities. The cities are Atlanta, Boston, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis-St. Paul, San Francisco, St. Louis and Washington, DC.

“Attending camp is one of the most rewarding childhood experiences,” said Angie Reese-Hawkins, President & CEO, YMCA of Metropolitan Washington. “Collaborating with the National Park Service will enhance the camp experience for so many of the youth who participate in the Y’s summer programs by providing education, recreation and service opportunities in our nation’s parks and historic sites. It will also provide work and service learning opportunities for teens and young adults in communities nationwide.”

This partnership is part of the Department of the Interior’s youth initiative to engage and employ the next generation to Play, Learn, Serve and Work in America’s great outdoors.

- **Play:** Interior will develop or enhance outdoor recreation partnerships in a total of 50 cities over four years to create new, systemic opportunities for outdoor play for more than 10 million young people.

- **Learn:** Provide educational opportunities to at least 10 million of the nation's K-12 student population annually. In addition to welcoming students into nature's classroom, Interior is developing and strengthening new online education resources to reach more students.
- **Serve:** Engage one million volunteers annually on public lands, effectively tripling current volunteer numbers. Many more people are interested in volunteering at national parks, wildlife refuges and public lands, but there are often insufficient staff resources to coordinate them. In order to achieve the volunteer goal, a renewed emphasis will be placed on volunteer coordination and management.
- **Work:** To develop the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards and ensure our own skilled and diverse workforce pipeline, Interior will provide 100,000 work and training opportunities to young people and veterans within our bureaus and through public-private partnerships. As part of this effort, the Department aims to raise an additional \$20 million from private and corporate donors to support youth work and training opportunities.

This initiative follows a Secretarial Order issued by Interior Secretary Sally Jewell to significantly expand recreational, educational, volunteer and career opportunities for millions of youth and veterans on the nation's public lands, including partnerships with businesses and nonprofit organizations to support the Obama Administration's 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC). The 21CSC is a national collaborative effort to put America's youth and veterans to work protecting, restoring, and enhancing America's natural and cultural resources.

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***About the Y:***

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We've been connecting and supporting men, women and children in Greater Washington for over 160 years – regardless of age, income or background. Anchored in Washington, DC, southern MD, and northern VA, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington creates a positive difference in the lives of more than 250,000 people each year through its 17 branches and program centers. We have the long-standing relationships and physical presence to not just promise, but deliver lasting personal and social change. For more information, visit [www.ymcadc.org](http://www.ymcadc.org), [www.facebook.com/YMetroDC](https://www.facebook.com/YMetroDC) or [www.twitter.com/ymcadc](https://www.twitter.com/ymcadc).

***About the National Park Service:***

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 407 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit us at [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov), on Facebook [www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice](https://www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice), Twitter [www.twitter.com/natlparkservice](https://www.twitter.com/natlparkservice), and YouTube [www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice](http://www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice).

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