

Date: August 30, 2013

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Alexandra DySard, Environmental Program Coordinator
Geoff Bradley, Environmental Programs Supervisor

Subject: 2013 Well KEPT Program Brief

Introduction

The City of Bellevue's Well KEPT (Kids Environmental Project Training) Program has completed another successful summer serving the Bellevue community. For 27 years, the Parks & Community Services Department has engaged youth and invested in our future by providing valuable employment opportunities to Bellevue teens through the Well KEPT Program.

The Well KEPT program is a summer youth employment program offered through the Bellevue Parks Natural Resource Division. The program is designed to provide Bellevue youth with education, job skills, and career development training in the field of park resource management. The work focuses on parkland renovation and maintenance and typical projects include forest enhancement, wetland restoration, and trail construction. The Well KEPT program combines on-the-job work experience with environmental education and career development training to instill strong self-esteem, good work habits, and sound environmental ethics.



Left: Roya removing Invasive English Holly.
Below: The 2013 Well KEPT Crew, including 10 Bellevue youth trainees and 2 supervisors.



2013 Projects and Accomplishments

Each year, the Well KEPT program completes a variety of projects throughout Bellevue Parks. This year's accomplishments include the following:

- Received training in trail design, construction, and maintenance while renovating approximately 2 miles of trails throughout Bellevue's open space trail system. This included resurfacing the Upper McTavish, Bellfield's Loop, Oak, and Newcastle Beach Park trails and installing pole structures on Kelsey Creek trails.
- Learned about the negative impacts of invasive plant species while clearing weeds such as Himalayan blackberry, tansy ragwort, common hawthorn, bindweed, English holly, English laurel, and English ivy throughout more than 25 acres of Bellevue's park system.



- Gained an understanding of hydrology and aquatic habitat while helping control the spread of policeman's helmet in Kelsey Creek Park.
- Learned about the ecological benefits of trees and native vegetation by removing English ivy and planting 130 native plants along Odle trail as well as weeding and mulching three restoration sites at the Lake Hills Ranger Station. subsequent

Ashley and Ellie clearing English Holly at the Chapin Property.



Before and after images showing the removal of invasive English Ivy and subsequent native planting along a section of Odle Trail.

Supplemental Education Workshops

In addition to providing on-the-job training, the program partners with outside agencies to develop and present educational workshops that help the teens understand the significance of their projects, improve their environmental awareness, and develop essential career skills. The 2013 workshops are listed below:

Workshop Topic

Native Plant Identification
Noxious Weeds
Recycling & Waste Management
Trail Construction & Maintenance
Tree Health and Management
Stream Health and Water Quality
Soils Survey and Analysis
Wildlife Ecology
Wetland Ecology
Personal Financial Management
Resume Building

Instructor, Organization

Ellen Weir & Niamh O'Rourke, City of Bellevue
Patrick Sowers, King County Noxious Weeds
Janet Prichard, Republic Services
Chris Vandall, City of Bellevue
Melissa Brown, City of Bellevue
Laurie Devereaux, City of Bellevue
Chuck Natsuhara, USDA/NRCS
Jen Syrowitz, Audubon Society
Curtis Kukal & Alexandra DySard, City of Bellevue
Marlyn Marcelo, Washington Society of CPAs
Ellen Weir & Niamh O'Rourke, City of Bellevue

Below: Saulyman searches for benthic invertebrates while learning about stream ecosystems in Coal Creek.



Roya and Chendo examine their catch with the help of Laurie Devereaux from the Stream Team.

Program Evaluation

The Well KEPT program relies on evaluations to measure success and increase the effectiveness of future programs. The table below shows a selection of responses from the final program evaluation.

2013 WELL KEPT PROGRAM Evaluation Responses				
Question	Did the program increase your understanding and appreciation of the natural environment?	Do you feel the program will be beneficial in helping you get and keep a future job?	Would you recommend the Well K.E.P.T. Program to others?	How would you rate the overall program?
Percentage of Yes Responses	100%	100%	100%	100% said Good or Excellent

Conclusion

The Parks Department Well KEPT program is a unique and innovative program that provides an exceptional first employment opportunity for Bellevue youth. The program serves many teens who have had limited opportunities for career development in the past. Well KEPT is an integral component of the Natural Resource Division environmental education and community outreach program that inspires citizens to engage in the care of Bellevue's Parks. By instilling strong environmental values and a positive work ethic in tomorrow's community leaders, the Well KEPT program provides cost-effective stewardship of our City in a Park.



Above: Ashley plants native plants along Odle Trail. Right: Roya and Yusuf work together to remove invasive ivy.