

## PowerCorps Service to Neighborhood Park SMA

*By Barb McCabe, Director of Stewardship*

The Parks Stewardship Office has been hiring *Seasonal Maintenance Attendants* (SMAs) to provide basic maintenance service to our neighborhood parks since 1999. Through this annual maintenance program, Parks & Recreation can provide the “safe, clean and ready to use ” for our parks, and then our Friends groups and local community organizations can “use them” to organize community events such as concerts, movie nights, workshops and festivals as well as beautification projects such as installing gardens and planting trees. These activities bring neighbors together and help to build broader support for the park and neighborhood.

The SMAs work from mid-April to mid-October, and the daily attention and service they provide during these busy, outdoor months is a key component of the success of the *Parks Stewardship Program*.

Many of the Park SMAs hired over the years are local residents referred to us by our Park Friends groups, have strong ties to the community and return year after year to the program. However, every year we typically have a few openings in the parks for new SMAs, and now we have a new in-house source for SMA candidates: *PowerCorps PHL*. The Stewardship Unit has been working closely with PowerCorps since the program started back in October 2013. PowerCorps is a workforce development program for young Philadelphians. Under the leadership of a PowerCorps crew supervisor, they provide six months of hands-on maintenance service in our parks and recreation centers. The end goal for PowerCorps participants is permanent employment; however, we saw an opportunity to help their progression by offering a seasonal employment opportunity as a natural next step in their development process. Paid seasonal employment in our system is often a requirement for many of our permanent work opportunities.

So far, the Stewardship Office has been able to hire 6 PowerCorps graduates, and we anticipate hiring a few more this spring from the latest group of candidates who will finish this month.

**In spring of 2014 we hired from the first PowerCorps class:**

- Michael Frazier, Harrowgate Park
- Derek Moore, Hawthorne Park and Ridgway
- Chaz Brown, Parkside-Evans and Triangle Park
- Leon Whetstone, Jefferson Square and Sacks Playground



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All four of these young men worked a successful 2014 season and will return as SMAs for the 2015 season after which they will have the one year of paid experience required for our entry level grounds maintenance positions. All four are also currently registered to participate in our Department's 2015 ***Sustainable Land Care Training*** led by Nic Esposito.

**In November 2014, we were able to hire two more graduates to form the second class. Both are currently working during the off-season Nov-late April (so stop by and say hello!):**

- Randy Rawles, Vernon Park
- Keith Hamilton, Wissinoming

This partnership with PowerCorps has **dual benefits**: it allows us to provide our communities with clean, safe parks and it also provides young Philadelphians with an opportunity to work for us and to learn all that Parks & Recreation has to offer. Seems like a win-win!



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