

TheCypressTimes

\$100,000 GRANTED TO AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS FROM THE CENTRAL TEXAS WILDFIRE FUND

Published 01/04/2012 - 6:02 a.m. CST



Bastrop State Park hit by wildfires

American YouthWorks will use grant money to rebuild Bastrop State Park

AUSTIN - On December 16, 2011, The Austin Community Foundation (ACF) announced it will grant \$100,574 from the Central Texas Wildfire Fund (CTWF) to American YouthWorks (AYW) to aid in debris clean-up and economic recovery following the Central Texas wildfires.

AYW's grant was one of ten awarded since the creation of the CTWF on September 5, 2011, and will help fund AYW's Environmental Corps (E-Corps) and Casa Verde Builders (CVB) service Corps programs while, under the direction of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), they work to fully re-open Bastrop State Park. AYW will clear hazardous debris, repair trails and boundary fences, rebuild damaged Park infrastructure, restore the native habitat and prevent invasive species from spreading, install protection measures to prevent erosion and recruit additional volunteers to work in the Park. According to TPWD, Bastrop State Park's 170,000 annual visitors generate more than \$2 million in revenue for Bastrop County each year.

The CTWF, which is administered by the ACF, and was created in response to the devastating wildfires that struck Central Texas over Labor Day weekend, 2011. The CTWF supports the immediate and long-term efforts of nonprofit organizations working "on the ground" in those areas hardest hit. The CTWF gives grants to 501(c)(3) nonprofits that are helping individuals, families, businesses and the community recover, rebuild and return to the quality of life that existed before the fires began. Other grants from the CTWF include money for volunteer leadership, family support, rebuilding homes and restoring safety.

"Bastrop State Park is a vital economic and natural resource. The near destruction of one of Texas' gems is devastating, but E-Corps and CVB members are honored that they can give back to their community by helping to rebuild it," said Parc Smith, CEO of AYW.

Youth and young adult service Corps members have been providing relief to Central Texans affected by the fire since September of 2011. These volunteers are members of AmeriCorps or YouthBuild, which are both national, community service programs that are hosted locally by AYW. Participants include young adult volunteers from all over the country as well as students attending AYW's charter high school. As part of previous recovery efforts, AYW worked with Bastrop County, FEMA, and local organizations and individuals to create the Volunteer Reception Center, which provided a central location for volunteers to get involved. They have also been working for several weeks in Bastrop State Park to help get the Park back to full operation.

In addition, to their experience in Bastrop, crews from AYW also assisted southeast Missourians following the devastating tornados earlier this year and in 2005 and 2006, they provided hurricane relief in New Orleans and East Texas. Service Corps members at AYW are gaining valuable skills that prepare them to step into leadership roles, handle difficult situations, operate safely and work hard while giving back to their community!

About American Youth Works

AYW is a 501(c)(3) organization based in Austin, Texas that integrates at-risk youth and AmeriCorps members

to provide education, service and green jobs training. AYW operates a public charter high school, the Service Learning Academy, a GED program and green jobs and service corps programs, Casa Verde Builders, Computer Corps, Environmental Corps, and Green Energy Corps. AYW also offers on-site life services to help students overcome obstacles to their education, including a parent and child development center, academic coaching and counseling. For more than thirty years, AYW has assisted thousands of local, at-risk youth and adult graduates from around the country in transforming their lives and gaining job skills through community service, education and a commitment to preserving the natural environment.

About Environmental Corps

E-Corps is a green jobs training and service program that allows at-risk youth and adult volunteers to build and restore the natural environment through parks and trails projects, forestry, and habitat restoration. E-Corps integrates young adults from all over the United States with local youth to create a blended, transformative, cultural experience for all participants.

About Casa Verde Builders

CVB is a green jobs training and service program that teaches youth, ages 17-24, cutting-edge, green construction techniques. Participants build energy-efficient, affordable homes in East Austin for first time homebuyers and learn the construction process from foundation to finish. This award-winning program is proven to produce higher academic performance and consistent attendance for its participants and creates a foundation for youth to pursue quality higher education and job placement. In partnership with the US Department of Labor and YouthBuild USA, CVB is a nationally-recognized leader in combining green building with affordable housing.