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Courtesy photo

KALKASKA – “I got into the SEEDS program because most of my life I was an inside kind of kid and being outside is a new experience for me,” said SEEDS Youth Corpsmember Daeveon Clemens. “I get to see new things.” Clemens is part of the team of youth hired from the City of Saginaw for conservation projects in their area.

For the second year in a row, the SEEDS Youth Corps partnered with the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge to hire a local crew to restore and protect native wildlife habitat, post visitor signage, maintain visitor facilities and trails, and build brochure boxes and benches within the 10,000 acre refuge.

“Through the SEEDS program we have the opportunity to provide employment for youth in the City of Saginaw as well as motivate these youth to become involved in the protection of their community, now and into the future,” said Deputy Refuge Manager Lelaina D. Muth.

After completing their work at the Refuge, the Saginaw crew of five traveled 'Up North' for a cultural exchange work-trip in October. For a week, they worked alongside other SEEDS Youth Corpsmembers to help open a Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy preserve in Kalkaska County.

On the job site, Corpsmembers worked on two Civilian Conservation Corps cabins, gaining experience in small construction, historic preservation and conservation.

“There is a lot of hard work that goes into protecting and opening a destination preserve,” said David Foote, director of stewardship for the Conservancy. “The two cabins, the only buildings to remain on the 130-acre grass lake, enhance the historic character of the property.

“It’s been great having the SEEDS Youth Corps help start a new chapter for the cabins, and we were very pleased to host the Saginaw crew for the week in one of the most serene and beautiful spots northern Michigan has to offer,” Foote added.

SEEDS projects are aimed at restoring native ecology, but are also much more.

“Our Youth Corps projects are as much about the youth we serve as the physical work we do,” said Jennifer Flynn, SEEDS Youth Corps Director. “With foundational partners, we are able to employ youth in both urban and rural communities providing them with opportunities to become more involved in the protection of their communities and the state of Michigan, now and into the future.”

Additional projects completed

by the SEEDS Youth Corps this past season include invasive species removal, ecologically-minded construction, and property maintenance. Corpsmembers also gained experience in Zero Waste management, shoreline restoration, phytoremediation planting projects and more.

SEEDS Youth Corps engages individuals ages 16-24 in workforce training for ‘green collar’ careers. Youth who thrive in an experiential learning environment are provided consistent mentorship and on-the-job skills training during the work season.

Since it was founded in 2009, the SEEDS Youth Corps has hired more than 450 youth, distributed over \$300,000 in scholarships, and paid more than \$1.3 million in wages directly to youth.

### About SEEDS

SEEDS is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization formed in 1999 to implement local solutions to today’s global challenges at the intersection of ecology, education and community design. SEEDS exists to foster healthy, vibrant communities filled with clean food, great kids, and helpful neighbors. Learn more at [ecoseeds.org](http://ecoseeds.org) or find the organization on Facebook and Twitter by searching @SEEDSTC.

# Planting 'SEEDS'

*Youth working outside:  
from Saginaw to Kalkaska*