

Grand Canyon Trust and Citizen Stewardship Council: Partnerships in Action by Kari Malen, Grand Canyon Trust Volunteer Coordinator

“There is nothing like watching the sun go down over House Rock Valley after a day of hard-earned sweat and toil, especially when the effort is going to a good cause.”
- Volunteer, 2006

Participation in Grand Canyon Trust (GCT) working vacations and Service Learning Programs often generates similar statements. GCT launched its volunteer program in 1999, focusing on conservation and restoration throughout the Colorado Plateau. Since then the program has expanded, and projects range from wildlife monitoring, invasive plant eradication, scientific data collection and monitoring, habitat restoration, archeology and beyond. The program has been deemed a huge success by local land managers, who are grateful for the assistance because of limited budgets in their own programs. In 2006 alone, GCT volunteers donated approximately 10,000 hours of time.

An essential element contributing to this growth is the Citizen Stewardship Council sponsored by the Arizona Community Foundation. Now in the third year of our partnership, The Citizen Stewardship Council has enabled the Trust to work with other organizations, including the Tucson Audubon Society, to establish connections between like-minded organizations. These fostered relationships enhance our ability to develop new programs and outputs that can be used by other agencies with similar goals.

A recent program spawned by this collaboration partnered GCT and Second Chance Center for Animals in Flagstaff. Together the agencies developed a program to deliver educational presentations to youth camps at Second Chance Center. The campers, being budding animal activists themselves, were quite interested and engaged in lively discussions of domestic versus wild animals and how our responsibilities change with those designations. Discussions included current wildlife issues and how to help. The program concluded with the campers brainstorming public outreach concepts, and creating posters to educate the community.

The success and enthusiasm of this program and its participants were the catalyst for the development of a more formal education program for the 2007 volunteer season at the Trust. We will now integrate on-site speakers as well as educational workshops into the volunteer projects.

Reaching out to the community allows our organization to expand its influence. The significance of this effort has been recognized by the community, which would be well served by continued investment in this type of program.

“Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends.”
– Benjamin Disraeli

To find out more about the programs offered or to apply to a GCT project, visit us on the Web at www.gcvolunteers.org