Yale University President’s Public Service Fellowship

- Organization: Common Ground High School, Urban Farm, and Environmental Education Center
- Full street address of organization: 358 Springside Ave, New Haven, CT 06515
- Website: commongroundct.org
- Name and title of the Direct Supervisor: Tom Gaudioso, Green Jobs Corps Coordinator
- Phone number and e-mail address of Direct Supervisor: 203-389-0823 x1209, tgaudioso@nhep.com
- Placement dates: Jun 4-Aug 9
- Are placement dates flexible? If so, please describe: Yes, there is flexibility, within the context provided in the question that follows.

Proposed work schedule

Mandatory hours of the program: Jun 4-Aug 9: Mon-Fri or Tue-Sat, 8:30-4:30

If Fellow is interested, they can work May 28-31, 8:30-4:30, but this is not mandatory
Placement Description

● Organization description

Common Ground is a center for environmental learning and leadership located at the base of West Rock Ridge State Park. Our mission is to cultivate habits of healthy living and sustainable environmental practices within a diverse community of children, young people, and adults. We accomplish this mission through three connected efforts:

o The nation’s longest-running charter high school focused on the environment – growing a new, more inclusive generation of successful college students and powerful environmental leaders.

o An environmental education center – each year connect more than 15,000 people of all ages with the natural world while helping them develop habits of sustainable living.

o An urban farm and 20-acre site – modeling sustainable agriculture, building community, and contributing to food justice for New Haven residents.

● Write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting

The Fellow would co-lead a crew of Green Jobs Corps members in work related to our site and urban farm, as well as provide hands-on support to Common Ground’s urban farm.

● Write a more complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow.

Job title: Farm Intern and Crew Leader

Common Ground’s Green Jobs Corps connects more than 50 Common Ground High School students with paid environmental work, career and leadership development opportunities, and individualized supports both during the summer and throughout the school year. This summer, Corps members will take on a variety of work placements – stewarding neighborhood greenspaces, restoring habitat on and off of Common Ground’s campus, growing and selling produce from Common Ground’s urban farm, monitoring water quality in New Haven rivers, and more.
Common Ground seeks a PPSF to **co-lead our Green Jobs Corps Farm Crew, as they take on important agricultural and food security work.** The Fellow will help supervise and work alongside members of the Green Jobs Corps Farm Crew, in partnership with Farm staff. The Fellow will also take responsibility for developing and facilitating a learning opportunity for our Youth Crew. The topic will be selected based on the interest and skill set of the Fellow, and will be discussed with the Green Jobs Corps Coordinator prior to the start of Youth Crew. This work will give the Fellow an opportunity to build capacity and understanding related to youth leadership, youth development, youth employment, and education.

In addition to the work with Farm Crew, the Fellow will also take on **hands-on work on Common Ground’s urban farm.** Our ¾ acre sustainable, diversified market garden grows over 8000 pounds of food and raises livestock in a unique urban setting. We sell our fresh produce and eggs at an on-site farm stand, through a Mobile Market and to our school cafeteria. The fellow will work under the guidance of our Farm Director, and alongside Common Ground students and other interns, in the following areas:

- Planting, cultivating and harvesting over 25 types of fruits and vegetables
- Running a farm stand - customers to money to displays
- Record keeping and money management
- Participate in weekly educational trips and workshops on farming related topics

The proposed work schedule is as follows:
- **Jun 4-Jun 29:** 36.5 hrs/week on the Farm; 1 hr/week planning learning opportunity
- **Jul 1-Aug 3:** 12.5 hrs/week on the Farm; 25 hrs/week co-leading Farm Crew
- **Aug 5-9:** 37.5 hrs/week on Farm

The Fellow’s work is a direct contribution to achieving Common Ground’s mission: cultivating habits of healthy living and sustainable environmental practices for a diverse community of children, adults, and families. Specifically, the Fellow will directly impact two critical Common Ground programs – our Green Jobs Corps and Urban Farm.

- List specific skills/experience required for the project:
  - Experience in working with youth, preferably high school aged
  - Commitment to social justice, inclusiveness, and work in racially diverse contexts
  - Good communication/interpersonal skills with people of all ages, especially
youth

- Good organizational skills and ability to multi-task
- Willingness to get dirty and work in the heat
- Ability to be work hard and be physically active for most of an 8 hour day
- Demonstrated commitment, reliability, punctuality, and responsible behavior
- An interest in learning about sustainable agriculture and local food
- Maturity, and the willingness to be a positive role-model and leader for young people (ages 14 – 18), while maintaining appropriate supervisory boundaries
- Strong writing, research, and program planning skills
- Flexibility with the ever changing needs of the farm and Green Jobs Corps program

- Additional requirements (e.g. a car or weekend working hours). If a car is required, include information regarding parking arrangements and mileage reimbursement):

A car is not necessary, as our site is accessible by the city bus or bicycle. However, parking is available if needed.

- Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your organization in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, describe any work that Yale students have done with your organization.

Common Ground has been fortunate to host a Yale Fellow on several occasions, and our site and our students have greatly benefited from their contributions. In summer 2007, a Fellow worked in the Ecology Camp as a counselor for the 6-8 year old campers. She also put in many hours in the garden and at our Farmer’s Market stand. In summer 2008, we significantly expanded our summer camp program and our Yale Fellow was instrumental in the launch of many new camp sessions. Summer 2008 also benefited from the farm and farmer’s market help of an additional Yale Fellow, who labored in the garden, worked with our teenage Youth Crew, attended farmer’s market, and helped us design attractive new publicity materials for our farmer’s market stand.

Summer 2009 saw the start of a very popular Saturday Open Farm Day and a successful on-site farmer’s market stand, both of which relied on the capable, hardworking help of our Yale Fellow. In 2010, our Fellow ran a small work crew in the garden and helped to make the on-site farm stand more successful than in
2009. In summer 2011, our Fellow was a Green Jobs Corps Youth Crew Assistant Supervisor, managing a team of teenage workers on Common Ground’s campus. She developed original environmental and food justice curricula, and ran various workshops for the entire Youth Crew throughout the summer. In the summer of 2012, our Fellow was also a Youth Crew Assistant Supervisor. She proved to be a valuable member of the team; helping to supervise the Farm Crew, running a workshop on goal setting, facilitating various team building activities and leading impromptu discussions on various issues such as the food system and human rights. She was instrumental in helping the program run effectively. Our 2017 Fellow proved to be an integral part of running our farm, and gathered stories/information from alum that has helped us assess the effectiveness of our Green Jobs Corps program. Most recently, in 2018, our Fellow was instrumental in helping to run our farm (in the midst of a particularly short-staffed season) and planned a 4-part “Food Stories” curriculum which addressed topics related to food security, food justice and food sovereignty, and culminated in an all-crew cooking event that allowed students to share dishes important to themselves and their families.

Other students from Yale have also worked as tutors for Common Ground High School, as research interns, as volunteers in the garden, and as mentors for students in classes doing field work and research on the farm and in the forest.