

Partnering with **YOUTH** **ORGANIZATIONS**

Friends Groups come together around a shared passion for a park or trail. Many members spend untold hours every year engaging in restoration and upkeep of their favorite natural places, planning cleanup or promotional events, and putting together newsletters for their membership.

However, many of these groups struggle with limited resources to accomplish their goals. Partnering with youth groups can be a great way to build capacity while also providing an opportunity for youth to build their resumes and give back to their local communities.



Courtesy of the Friends
of Sunfish Lake Park

Partnership Benefits

Building organization capacity

Working with youth service organizations can add valuable capacity to projects that might require heavy lifting or multiple participants to accomplish.

Bringing fresh energy to a project

Youth volunteers often have more time and energy than adults, and sometimes new perspectives as well.

Building community support

Engaged volunteers can serve as ambassadors for your organization to the wider community.

Cultivating a new generation of volunteers

Encouraging volunteerism from a young age promotes the habit later in life - something that many of our volunteer-based organizations are in dire need of.

We thank these groups for helping inform this primer:

[Friends of Lake Elmo's Sunfish Lake Park](#)
[Friends of Tettegouche State Park](#)
[Frontenac State Park Association](#)
[Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement \(MAVA\)](#)
[youth.gov](#)

Contact us

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Partnership Best Practices

BEFORE THE PROJECT

Do your research!

There are multiple types of youth service organization, and you can see a few examples on the right. Many of our respondents also reached out to contacts in their community to find service learning groups in need of a project, so don't neglect those local connections!

Get permission

Before you do anything else, work with your park/trail staff to make sure you have the necessary permits and insurance.

Set expectations

In your communications with the volunteer organization, provide details on duties, hours needed, and the length of the time commitment. You can see an example of the kinds of details to share [here](#).

Have a consistent contact person

Designate one of your group members as the contact member for the volunteer group. This will keep communications simple.

DURING THE PROJECT

Create a welcoming atmosphere

Make sure that your volunteers feel welcome onsite! Greet them when they arrive, offer refreshments, and thank them for donating their time.

Set your volunteers up for success

Youth volunteers may need more supervision than adults. Make sure student groups understand their tasks for the day and feel confident enough to fulfill them.

AFTER THE PROJECT

Maintain the relationship

If you've completed a successful project in partnership with a youth service organization, keep those lines of communication open! You never know when you might need volunteers for a project, and it's always easier to build on an existing relationship than to create a new one out of whole cloth.



Courtesy of the Friends of Wild River State Park

Examples of Youth Organizations:

Scout Troops

Both Boy and Girl Scout Troops have a strong community service component - the Friends Groups we interviewed found great success partnering with their local troops on habitat restoration projects.

National Honor Society

"Service" is one of the four basic requirements for membership in the National Honor Society, and members are often looking for volunteer opportunities in their community.

Youth groups

Many religious communities encourage their youth to engage in volunteering activities that benefit their communities.

4-H

Service learning is a major component of participation in a 4-H club. Your local chapter may have students who are looking for a service project to participate in.