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- News Release -

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christie Administration Congratulates New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg on Receiving “Project of the Year” Award *Group Honored for Historic Preservation Work at Gateway National Recreation Area*

TRENTON, N.J., Feb. 11, 2016 – The Christie Administration today congratulated New Jersey Youth Corps (NJYC) of Phillipsburg on receiving a 2016 Project of the Year Award from the Corps Network for their Hands-On Preservation Experience (HOPE) Crew project at Gateway National Recreation Area’s Sandy Hook Unit. The award was presented at the Corps Network National Conference, “The Legacy Continues,” in Washington on Feb. 10.

“We couldn’t be more pleased that New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg was selected for this honor,” said Commissioner Harold J. Wirths of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. “Youth Corps are vital to the strength of our communities, and NJYC Phillipsburg has done much to preserve history in Sandy Hook and teach youth invaluable skills in construction and woodworking.”

The Corps Network, the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, presents this prestigious award on an annual basis to select organizations from their membership of 120 Corps across the country. Three to four Project of the Year awards are presented to Corps that have undertaken especially influential or innovative endeavors within the past year. Projects of the Year are considered noteworthy for their ability to provide a positive experience to Corpsmembers as well as meaningful improvements to the local community.

The HOPE Crew project at Gateway National Recreation Area's Sandy Hook Unit was the second HOPE Crew project undertaken by NJYC Phillipsburg. Having worked previously with the Corps Network and the National Trust for Historic Preservation on the successful completion of a HOPE Crew project at Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, NJYC Phillipsburg was granted the task of demolishing and reconstructing the porch of the Sandy Hook Unit's Building 26, formerly the Commander's Quarters, and now the Unit's headquarters.

The demolition and reconstruction of the porch at building 26 was a break from NJYC Phillipsburg's usual routine of trail maintenance and landscaping projects. Other than building picnic tables and benches, NJYC Phillipsburg had limited experience with construction or wood working. However, the task proved to be extremely rewarding for both the Corpsmembers and NJYC Phillipsburg staff.

"We were challenged both physically and mentally with long days, with hard hours. We learned a great deal about historic preservation and about the geographic region in which we were working," said Michael Muckle, director of NJYC Phillipsburg. "We also learned about ourselves, and what we were capable of. But the best part was how we were able to create a pathway for employment for these guys that utilized their experience to advance to the next stage of their lives."

Corpsmembers on the Sandy Hook project had many notable achievements: five Corpsmembers performed over 1,200 hours of service while learning the craft of historic preservation; two Corpsmembers secured work in the construction trades as laborers; and three Corpsmembers obtained their high school diplomas while engaged in the project, citing the work they performed as having a directly beneficial impact.

"By restoring the historic porch, not only do NJYC youths learn valuable career and workplace skills, but they also make us in the National Park Service look good—literally," said John Harlan Warren, external affairs officer for the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway NRA.

Youth Corps was created in 1984 and serves young people from age 16 to 25 who have left high school before graduating. NJYC is one of the largest youth service and conservation corps in the United States.

Youth Corps members work in teams to perform a variety of service projects. In return for their efforts, they receive education development in basic skills and preparation to obtain a GED or locally issued adult high school diploma. They also received instruction in life skills and employability skills; personal and career counseling to build self-esteem and develop leadership skills while developing a career portfolio; and continued support services during transitions to college, training, employment or other national and domestic services opportunities.

Ninety percent of NJYC members who successfully complete the program return to traditional high schools, enter the military, obtain direct job placement, enter an on-the-job training program, enter college, vocational training, or enter a full-time community service program. Currently, 12 NJYC sites serve more than 650 youth each year in Atlantic, Camden, Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic, Union, and Warren counties.

More information about New Jersey Youth Corps can be found [here](#).



Members of the New Jersey Youth Corps of Phillipsburg accept the Project of the Year Award from the Corps Network in Washington.