



CANAL CLASSROOMS 2018/2019 School Year Donor Impact Report

In appreciation of your support for the C&O Canal National Historical Park's Canal Classrooms program, we offer this report on the impact of your generosity.

Seven Years of Achievement

The 2018/2019 school year marks the seventh year that the C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP) has offered its nationally-recognized Canal Classrooms program to K-12th grade students from our region. Between the fall of 2012 and the spring of 2019, more than 67,000 students have benefited from Canal Classrooms and associated educational programs in the Park. This opportunity has allowed young people from a wide variety of backgrounds to learn the unique history of the C&O Canal and to deepen their knowledge of the natural world in one of the most biologically diverse national parks in the United States. They have also learned the importance of the Park to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and been introduced to the C&O Canal as not only a place to learn, but also to a wonderful venue for healthy recreational activities.



Through classroom lessons, in-school visits from Park Rangers, and field trips to one of three locations in the Park – Great Falls, Williamsport, or Cumberland – over 7,000 students over the 2018/2019 school year enjoyed a variety of learning experiences that brought STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) concepts alive in a meaningful and memorable way. The long term impact affects not only the students' lives in terms of career choices, connecting them to our nation's past and deepening their knowledge of the natural world and processes, but also helps to fulfill a critical mission of the National Park Service (NPS) to inspire and nurture the national park stewards of the future. In addition, by engaging students through public school systems, Canal Classrooms introduces children from across the ethnic, racial, and economic spectrum to a national park that is highly accessible and fee-free everywhere but at Great Falls. For many, particularly those from more urban, lower income schools, it is their first visit to a national park.



From Canal Classroom's inception, the C&O Canal Trust has worked closely with the C&O Canal NHP to sustain and grow this innovative program during a period of chronic federal funding shortfalls for the National Park Service (NPS) that has resulted in critical NPS staff shortages. What makes this possible is the recruitment and retention of the trained volunteer Canal Classroom Corps (CCC), a cadre of professionals – mostly retired

educators – who are the boots on the ground that deliver the program to the students and ensure that it adheres to the curriculum guidelines and standards of participating school systems. This helps to maintain the excellence of the program because it recognizes the value and expertise of these volunteers in a very concrete way, and serves as a great incentive for them to continue to volunteer for the program from year to year.

Since Canal Classrooms began in the fall of 2012, the C&O Canal Trust has paid close to \$270,000 in CCC stipends. The Trust also pays stipends to classroom teachers who attend Canal Classrooms trainings over the summer. Over the 2018/2019 school year, the C&O Canal Trust paid 50 CCC teachers a daily stipend of \$75, totaling \$30,900 for the academic year.

Highlights of 2018/2019

Over the 2018/2019 school year, Canal Classrooms integrated units of the Chesapeake Bay's Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE) program into its curriculum to support a Maryland state mandate to strengthen the environmental literacy of students in the state's public schools. The purpose of MWEE is to engage students in watershed restoration and protection projects, and to teach them about how their everyday choices impact the environment. Over the past year, Canal Classrooms students engaged in water testing, learning about erosion, the impact of plastic and other trash on the environment, and the effects of invasive plants on biodiversity in the Potomac River Valley.





At Great Falls, 950 7th through 12th grade students performed environmental field studies through Bridging the Watershed, a program that is a partnership between the Park and the Alice Ferguson Foundation. In Washington County, the pilot program begun in the previous school year to engage 11th and 12th grade AP Environmental Studies students in Citizen Scientist projects was expanded to include all seven county high schools. A total of 245 AP students undertook research projects in

the Park during the 2018/2019 school year with the support of Canal Classroom Corps teachers.

Among Canal Classroom's collateral benefits is that CCC volunteers have lent their time and expertise (including Spanish language skills) to the C&O Canal Trust's Canal For All diversity outreach program. In July 2019, 90 Latino middle schoolers visited Great Falls as part of Latino Conservation Week. Along with recreational activities, the young people were given a guided nature walk to Great Falls by two CCC teachers, one of whom is a native Spanish speaker.

Challenges

The most critical challenge experienced over the past school year was the shortage of fulltime National Park Service staff to oversee Canal Classrooms at all three locations in the Park, a consequence of federal funding shortfalls. Major construction on the canal at Great Falls also impacted the program, resulting in the suspension of the Charles Mercer boat program, a popular component of Canal Classrooms at that location. The result was that the program was offered at Great Falls only during the spring 2019 semester. The Williamsport and Cumberland programs operated at full capacity in both the fall and the spring.



Park Educational Program Participation 2018/2019

Site	Program	Grades	# of students	# of Canal Classrooms Corps
Montgomery County/Great Falls	Bridging the Watershed	7 th – 12 th	950	0
Montgomery County/Great Falls	Canal Classrooms	K – 8 th	1200	61
Washington County/Williamsport	Canal Classrooms	4 th	2510	274
Washington County/Williamsport	AP Environmental Studies	11 th – 12 th	245	10
Allegany County/Cumberland	Canal Classrooms	1 st – 8 th	2174	75
TOTAL			7079	420



Thank you for your support!