



AmeriCorps members serve with Emerald Youth this summer

Thirty-six AmeriCorps members have begun a summer term with JustLead, Emerald Youth Foundation's neighborhood-based program for urban youth. They will lead young people in a variety of health and educational programs this summer, and of course, have lots of fun with the kids.

AmeriCorps, a program of the U.S. Corporation for National and Community Service, engages more than 80,000

Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country.

If interested in Emerald Youth's AmeriCorps program, contact Rachel Davis at rdavis@emeraldyouth.org.

Emerald Youth is recruiting this summer for part-time school year AmeriCorps positions, to begin in August.



Thomasiah Agnew, left, Lucia Vasquez and drama camp director Mary Johnson perform in the play, "Talent Town, Tennessee," during JustLead Camp Week last summer.

Emerald Youth Foundation offers Summertime fun, safety

Vacation times often hold a hidden barb for inner city children and teens.

Higher rates of poverty and unemployment, greater numbers of single-parent households and a smaller stock of recreational facilities in the central city mean that urban kids seldom go on the vacations they see advertised. Many children simply spend the days roaming their neighborhoods or staying at home alone.

Emerald Youth offers a range of programming in a safe place. The organization also supports youth spiritually and helps them stay sharp academically, including preparing them for college.

Through JustLead, its neighborhood-based ministry, Emerald offers daytime and evening programming, via a network of urban churches and faith-based organizations. The newest is Laurel Church of Christ at 3457 Kingston Pike which is offering a day camp this summer for interested children who are rising second through eighth graders.

A highlight is JustLead

Camp Week, June 16-20, when more than 200 children will choose one themed-day camp, ranging from outdoor adventures to gardening or dance. The entire week is generously sponsored by Variety of Eastern Tennessee and concludes with a daylong trip to Knoxville Zoo – an always-popular event.

"Our intention behind JustLead Camp Week is to expose kids to something they really enjoy. We also want to provide camp options the kids might not otherwise have access to or be able to participate in," said Emerald Youth staff member Kent Stanger.

Other events will include a middle school trip to Carowinds Amusement Park in Charlotte, N.C., and opportunities for high school students to visit colleges, learn about careers, and enjoy hiking and tubing.

"We have a heavy emphasis on the out-of-doors and relationship-building. We use the summer and the weather while we've got it," Stanger said.

Knoxville Force soccer games make ideal summer entertainment

Ava Garrett, 8, a rising third-grader at Halls Elementary School, got the thrill of her life the evening of May 10.

During pregame ceremonies at Regal Soccer Stadium, before the Knoxville Force sparred with the Nashville FC, Ava and her Emerald Youth soccer teammates got to walk onto the field with the Force players.

The children formed a "V" for the adult team to walk through. They stood on the field with the Force as the introduction and announcements were made and the crowd sang the national anthem. Then the game roared into play.

Ava, who stood with goalkeeper Marcel Barwanietz, is eager to go to another Force game. She said she loved watching the adult players up close. "It was fun to watch them play. Not on TV, but in real life," she said.

Her EY soccer teammate Ella Marie Reyes, 8, said she liked watching the adults execute difficult moves. "I want to see how competitive teams are and how aggressive you have to be," added Ella, a rising fourth-grader at Beaumont Elementary.

Ava and Ella said they think all Knoxville children and youth who play soccer will enjoy the games of both men and women,



Knoxville Force player Travis Bolton, Emerald Force players Julio Rico and Nevaeh Harness, and Paige Hoffman of the women's Force team.

Knoxville's semi-pro soccer teams. Returning title sponsors this year include ORNL Federal Credit Union (for the men) and Pro2Serve (for the women).

The games are ideal, summer night outings for families and are played at beautiful Regal Soccer Stadium on the University of Tennessee campus. The next home game of the Force will be Friday, June 6, at 7:30 p.m., when they take on the Atlanta Silverbacks Reserves.

Since its inception in 2011, the Knoxville Force has enjoyed a positive association with Emerald Youth. Recently, the relationship between Emerald Youth's soccer program and Knox-

ville Soccer LLC, owner of the both Force teams, became more formal. In April, the two organizations began a merger to become one club.

"This partnership will allow us to advance our commitment to bringing a higher level of the world's most popular sport, soccer, to Knoxville in a manner that should have a major positive impact on our area's urban youth. We are extremely pleased to be able to work with Emerald Youth Foundation," said Dr. Barry Goss, president of Knoxville Soccer LLC.

Emerald Youth's soccer program will now be known as the Emerald Force Soccer Club, a junior club to the Knoxville Force. It is a rela-

tionship common in cities with a professional soccer team.

Emerald Force looks forward to strengthening its soccer program, which now includes about 300 children playing on academy teams and at least five club teams this fall. Knoxville Force will continue to grow as a regional team in the National Premier Soccer League.

Schedules and ticket info at www.knoxvilleforce.com.

Swimmers race to summer season

Emerald Youth's summer swim team – the Emerald Force – has a lineup of swimmers raring to go.

New head coach Justin Baxter is the former swim coach at Bearden High School.

"We are looking forward to a good season. We expect to have stronger swimmers this year," said Dwayne Sanders, Emerald Youth sports director. "Justin thinks we can win a meet or two. We have at least four swimmers now who swim year-round."

Emerald's team can accommodate 50 swimmers.

Emerald Force has a schedule of four regular meets plus the Smoky Mountain Invitational Meet July 13 and the City Swim Meet July 25.



Swimmer A.J. Humphries at a meet last summer.

As a competitive sport for kids, swimming receives high marks: it is low-injury, promotes fitness and helps prevent obesity, which afflicts about 40 percent of urban Knoxville youth. It is also an ideal lifelong sport.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found that African-American children ages 5-14 are almost three times more likely to drown than white children.

But programs like Emerald's are creating a difference. Last year, several Emerald swimmers went on to swim in the fall and winter with the Tennessee Aquatics competitive swim club.

Emerald leads more than 200 children to swim lessons each fall, spring and summer. Presently, kids are taking lessons through the Learn to Swim program at the YWCA.

At the Ed Cothren pool, where the team practices, urban children are gaining proficiency with every stroke.

We're moving to mid-week!

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