



YOUNG AMBASSADORS

Class of 2025

Graduation: May 8, 2025, at 7:00 PM



Pennsylvania
Department of Transportation

A program of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, sponsored by PA Department of Transportation.

Agenda

Welcome, Introductions, and Closing Remarks:

Kylie McCutcheon, Young Ambassadors Coordinator, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

Young Ambassadors 2025 ~ A year in Review:

- Emmet, 11th grade, Schuylkill County
- Ghizal, 11th grade, Bucks County
- Kumba, 11th grade, Montgomery County
- Anna, 11th grade, Franklin County
- Anvi, 10th grade, Delaware County

Guest Commencement Speakers:

- Michael Carroll, Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Phoebe Coles, Chair, Keep PA Beautiful Board



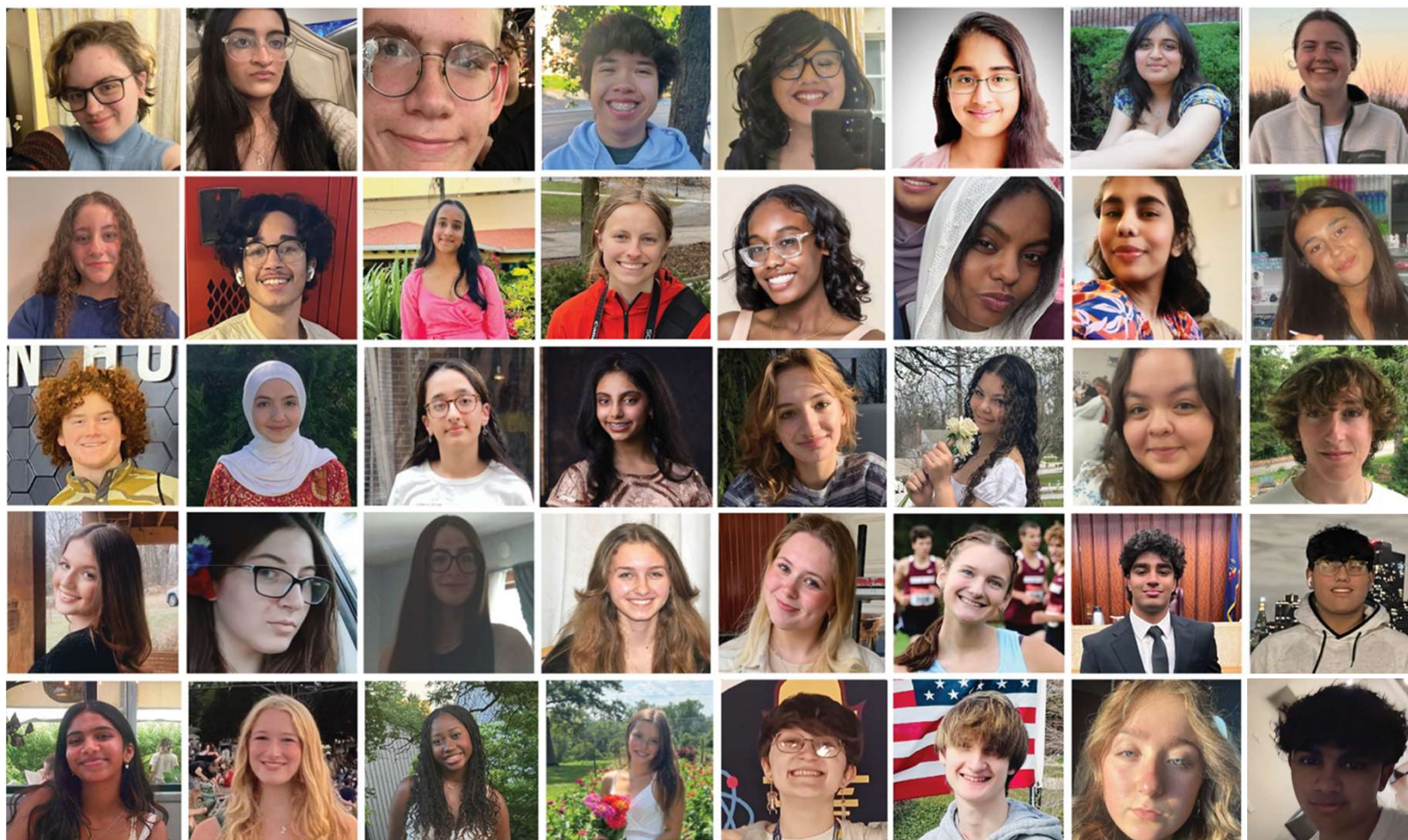
Young Ambassador Program Goals

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful will:

1. Guide Ambassadors through a six-step process to implement change in their community.
2. Provide education and training on such topics related to the impact of litter on roadways, litter prevention, waste management and recycling, civic engagement and related public policy, volunteer management, and social media marketing.
3. Provide networking opportunities to not only build a sense of community within the program, but also to promote professional development of the individual Ambassador.



Young Ambassadors Class of 2024-2025



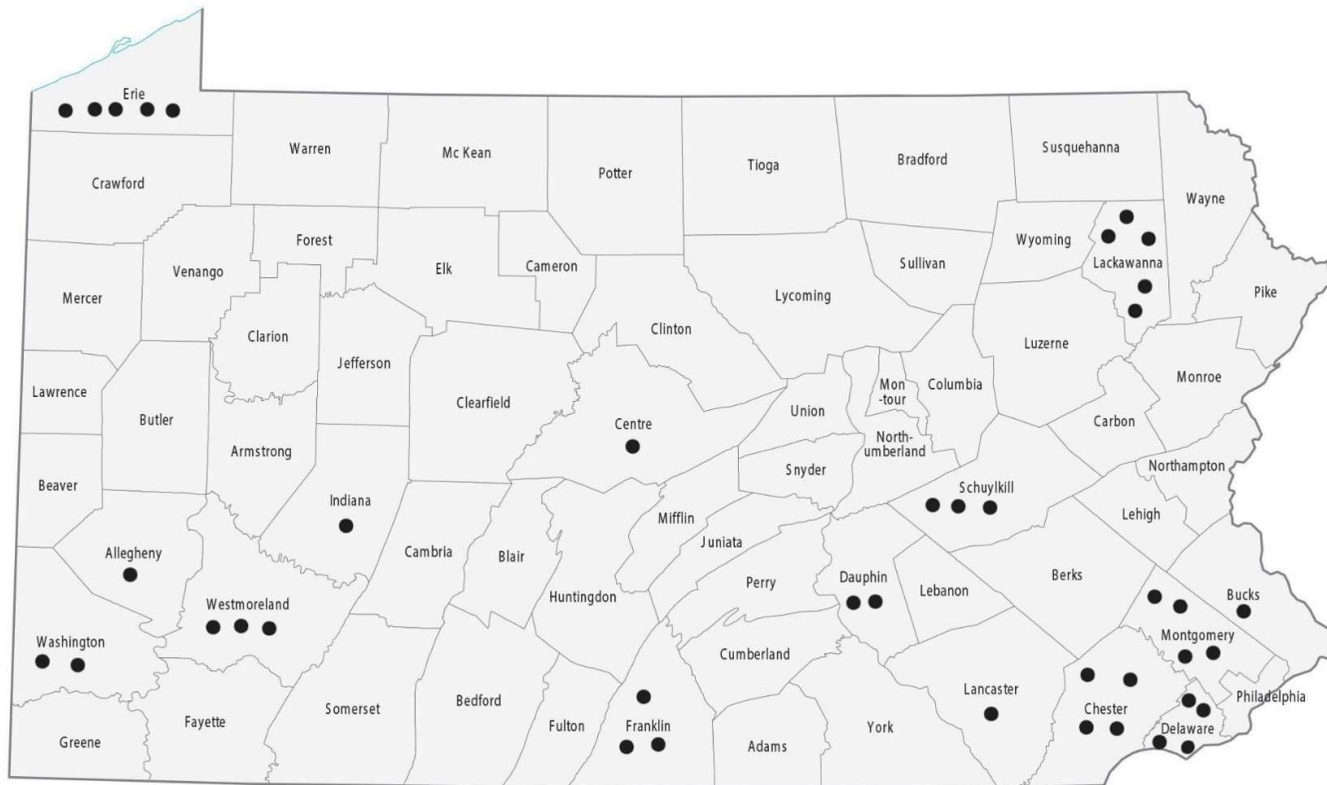
Young Ambassador Program Requirements

Young Ambassadors will:

1. Attend six virtual workshops.
2. Conduct a Community Assessment and make a slideshow showcasing it.
3. Conduct and report on one community cleanup.
4. Conduct and report on one community education event or activity.



2024~2025 Class of Young Ambassadors of PA, 40 students across 15 counties



Sample Learning Objectives and Assignments

Sample Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the Five Step Change Management Process.
2. Learn how to Conduct a Community Assessment.
3. Understand the Benefits of Outdoor Environmental Education and age-appropriate activities.
4. Learn how to organize and lead community events.

Assignments:

1. Conduct a Community Assessment
2. Conduct a Community Education Event
3. Conduct a Community Cleanup
4. Contribute to our Graduation presentation



Trainings and Guest Speakers

Orientation

- Kylie McCutcheon, Young Ambassadors Program Manager
- Natasha Fackler, Chief of Staff to the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection

Conducting a Community Assessment & Environmental Education

- Shannon Reiter, Executive Director, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful
- Rachael Stark, Keep Northeastern PA Beautiful, PA Environmental Council

Professional Networking

- Ruby Mundok, Executive Director of Governor Shapiro's Advisory Commission on Next Generation Engagement
- Wesley Robinson, Press Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
- Gerald Bright, Assistant Director of Program Development, Office of Clean and Green Initiatives, Philadelphia PA

Cleanup Safety Training and Sustainability initiatives at NiSource and Dow

- Sue Urchek, Program Coordinator, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful
- Carla Parkes, Senior Public Affairs Specialist, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania and Maryland
- Anya (Schoss) Ritchie, Manager, Natural Resources Permitting, NiSource Environmental
- Meghan Leinhauser, Corporate Volunteer Manager, Dow



Trainings and Guest Speakers

Leave No Trace Overview and networking with Texas and Virginia Young Ambassadors

- Kylie McCutcheon, Young Ambassador and Affiliate Coordinator
- Corinne Pierce, Affiliate and Youth Programs Manager, Keep Texas Beautiful
- Karla Camacho, Communications Coordinator, Keep Texas Beautiful
- Cristi Lawton, Executive Director, Keep Virginia Beautiful
- Beckey Watson, Development Director, Keep Virginia Beautiful

Policy and Practice

- Marisa Balanda, Deputy Policy Director, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Kelsey Demerlis, Director, Center for Community Services, Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
- Shannon Reiter, Executive Director, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

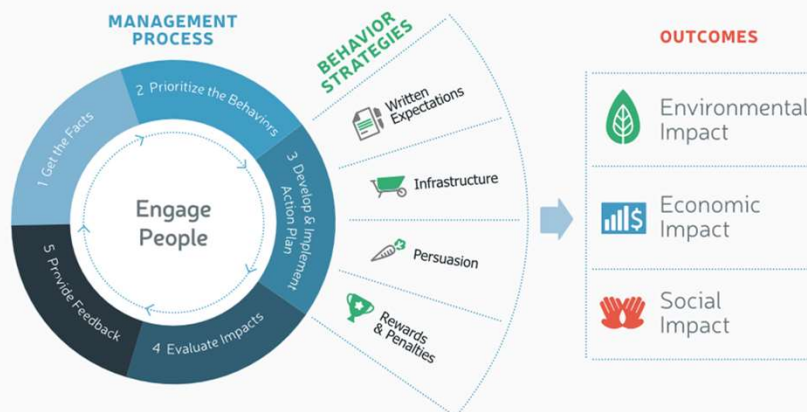


We Learned About and Conducted Community Assessments

Through a Community Assessment, Young Ambassadors began the five-step process of bringing about change in their communities. The first steps in the process is **ENGAGE PEOPLE** and **GET THE FACTS**.

Keep America Beautiful Model for Change

An Integrated Approach to More Beautiful Communities



Academically developed with decades of validation in the field, our behavior change system engages people at every step and results in sustainable change for the greater good.

Sample Community Assessments:

- **The Road to Recycling at Susquehanna Township High School**, Hannah, 11th grade, Dauphin Co
- **Waste Reduction In Fairview Township** Masa, 11th grade, Erie Co
- **Assessing Illegal dumping in McAdoo and Kline Township**~ Callum, 10th grade, Schuylkill Co
- **Stormwater Pollution KPB Community Assessment** ~ Noori, 11th grade, Chester Co



Community Assessment “How-To”

The Community Assessment meeting was really eye-opening for me. When we talked about getting to the root of environmental issues, I found it interesting and agreed that **we first must understand why a problem exists before we attempt to find solutions for it.** I think so often we want to believe that big-scale changes can happen quickly, but **the truth of it is that it takes time and great effort, and it also takes being able to communicate effectively and show empathy.** These are important lessons in really any facet of life. ~ Ghizal

I really enjoyed completing the community assessment. **It made me research and ask questions that I wouldn't usually ask.** I think the format we were given was really informative and it made me realize how I could make a serious change in my community! ~ Peyton

The community assessment gave me the chance to see strengths and needs of my community up close. It felt great to be a part of something that could and will make a real impact. Also, collaborating with others during the assessment made it feel like a team effort, which is always motivating. ~ Naba



We Presented and Accepted Feedback on our Community Assessments from Policy Professionals

Policy Professionals

- **Marisa Balanda**, Deputy Policy Director at Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- **Kelsey Demerlis**, Director, Center for Community Services, Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development

What did we Learn?

- My favorite session was the “Policy and Practice” session. **It offered me the unique opportunity to present my community assessment to stakeholders and professionals in our community and receive feedback on my thought process.** It additionally allowed me the practice of presenting an assessment to a group of people which I truly appreciated. ~ Noori
- The meeting on Policy and Practice was very insightful to me. **The professionals who presented made me feel I can make a difference in my community.** Recycling was discussed a lot as well as ways to implement a system at school. The specific suggestions highlighted different ways I can make a difference in my community. ~ Holden



Community Assessment Example

KEY STAKEHOLDERS



Bensalem Government/Administration

Bucks County officials have responsibility over setting regulations, creating recycling policies, and overseeing the management of the Bensalem environment under the guidance of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Resources Council.

Waste Management Companies

There are numerous private waste management companies that work in accordance with the township in collecting, sorting, and proper processing of recyclables. There are also recycling facilities that determine the demand for collected recyclables and help ensure that material is optimally repurposed.

Environmental Orgs

Organizations such as Community Recycling coordinate efforts with Bensalem in order to raise recycling awareness, organize local clean-up events, and advocate for recycling initiatives. They work in tandem with other organizations to collect and recycle donated goods, clothing and shoes and assist in fundraising with other local groups.

Residents

The people who live in Bensalem are perhaps the most important of stakeholders. They hold the knowledge and accessibility to recycle materials. The more residents participate and adhere to recycling guidelines, the more impactful and effective recycling programs become.

COMMUNITY STATUS

ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❑ Passing the "Solid Waste Management Act" and the "Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Acts" in 1988 to mandate the recycling of materials.
- ❑ There is wide accessibility to private haulers for residents to remove their waste and ensure that recyclables are being sent to the right place.
- ❑ Commercial and institutional establishments in Bensalem Township are required by the municipality to implement recycling programs. This includes: the recycling of high-grade office paper, aluminum, corrugated paper, leaf waste, etc.

IMPROVEMENT AREAS

- ❑ Public education in schools of recycling must be enhanced in order to reach students and motivate them to recycle and educate their family members in turn. There needs to be straightforward discussions of what can and cannot be recycled.
- ❑ Adding more options for recycling — such as accepting electronics, which can prevent improper disposal.
- ❑ Establishing more convenient recycling pick-ups to improve collection.

THE ACTION PLAN

01

Holding an electronic recycling event to address the lack of electronic waste collection. This would be a simple event where residents can come and drop off their electronic waste.

02

Incentivizing residents to recycle more through social media engagement, workshops, and printed materials to improve the overall quality of recycling in the township. I could contact Community Recycling and propose volunteering initiatives as well where people can be rewarded for their commitment.

03

Along with waste management companies in Bucks, we can make recycling bins more accessible to the general public by posting them in frequented parks, shopping malls, schools and other high-traffic areas. There should be clear labeling on these bins and separation of different types of recyclable materials so as to avoid any confusion or misconception.

04

Promoting programs and education about composting to reduce methane emissions, divert organic material from landfills and improve soil health and local agriculture through providing useful compost. I could accomplish this by educating my club members at school on these topics and helping them understand the imperativeness of composting.

by Ghizal



We Had Two Specific Networking Opportunities

- Professional Networking with industry leaders in Pennsylvania
- Leave No Trace/ Peer Networking Session with Ambassadors from Texas and Virginia

My favorite session was the Networking with Professionals, because it gave insight on the different impacts we could make on our environment, despite our younger age. **It also opened my eyes on the various careers available in the policy/environmental science realm.** ~ Peyton

I enjoyed Networking with Professionals the most. It showed me what viable opportunities for community stewardship are available for younger people. **Seeing a new generation begin to speak up in each of the different sectors was inspiring!** ~ Edie



Environmental Education Training Prepared Us for Our Events

From planning and hosting this event, I was reminded of the lasting impact educating children has on their future potential to help the environment. This event was super fun and rewarding; Our education event was for kindergarteners who were eager to engage in our lesson plan about marine debris. ~ Silvia

I'm usually someone who has trouble talking and presenting in front of people. But, **during my event I caught myself feeling passionate and less anxious than I would usually be.** It made me realize how great it feels to motivate and work with others about a good cause. It brought me closer to my community and the event was beneficial based on the feedback I received from others. ~ Naba

I learned more about organization and gathering people together for one event! Once the event had been held I **felt so proud of myself and my community, it really brings everyone together.** ~ E



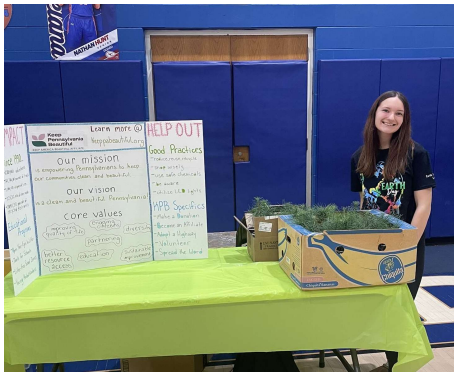
Lessons Learned from Conducting Education Events

I discovered that most students (including my 5th grade teacher) had no idea that plastics are numbered and only certain ones can be recycled in my community. This event was also the first time that many of them learned pizza boxes and electronics cannot be recycled. I was surprised how much they were unaware of but I am very glad to have done the event and I am hopeful that my community's recycling system will benefit. ~ Erica

My event was about teaching kindergarteners about niche recycling and how that helps our environment using an engaging presentation and engaging the kids with toys. I had a few kids who were rowdy and asking inappropriate questions like how many people die everyday due to bad recycling. I handled this by going along with their questions and having a thoughtful answer to every hand that was raised. ~ Alex

What worked the best for me was working with the kids' creativity. Adjusting a few activities, I allowed the kids to be creative and have fun. This made them more engaged with what I was teaching them and made them ask very good questions concerning things such as the importance of public transportation or ways to contain pollution. ~ Katie





Cleanup Training Prepared Us to Host Safe Events

Hosting a cleanup event offered valuable insight not just in the physical condition of the community, but the people, systems, and social demographics within it. **It was also a great exercise in networking and collaborating with other organizations with a common goal.** I really enjoyed seeing individuals from a variety of backgrounds come together to achieve the mission of keeping Pennsylvania beautiful. Organizing the event did present challenges, however I believe this promoted development in aspects such as communication and advertising.~ Brett

I'm grateful to everyone who took the time to join us for the clean up event! It was such a great experience to work not only with students from another school but also with members of our local community. It was great to see people come together making our environment better. As the day went on, and we cleared debris, you could really see the difference our work was making. **There's something special about looking at a cleaner, healthier space and knowing that you helped make it happen.** It's a feeling that will stay with me and motivate me to keep doing my part to care for our community.
~ Emmet



Lessons Learned from Hosting Cleanup Events and How We Felt Afterward

Working with my fellow ambassadors and other volunteers, I learned the true value of teamwork in leading environmental initiatives. Some challenges came with finding a day when the weather was suitable for the clean-up event. My team members and I had to postpone the event due to a storm, but once we found a suitable day, it was a successful and rewarding experience. Sue Urchek's advice was taken into consideration when planning what tools to bring to our event. ~ Silvia Kang

At first, I was worried people wouldn't actually put in the work during the clean up event. However, everyone came together and shared laugh and hope. Seeing how motivated everyone was made me feel like we were building something beautiful. **It was also heartwarming to see volunteers share their dreams for a greener future, creating tapestry of hope and commitment.** One problem though was that it starting raining towards the end of the clean up! We still pushed through and waited it out, definitely takes a lot of patience! ~ Naba Hassan



Cleanup and Education Event Statistics

Cleanup events:

- Volunteers Engaged: 218
- Number of Bags of Litter Collected: 160
- Number of Tires Cleaned Up: 35
- Number of Appliances Cleaned Up: 7
- Number of Greens Planted: 133
- Number of Invasive Species Removed: 429



Education events:

- Number of People Educated: 967



We Made Connections in Our Communities

I reached out to my local Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful affiliate, Rebecca Yurkovich. **She was very helpful in creating a presentation to share with a school administrator** and also gave me resources to help plan a cleanup event. ~ Anvi

I was able to collaborate with the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association. They assisted by providing a means of disposal for the waste collected as well as rallying additional volunteers. **Connecting with this organization also helped to develop networking skills which are extremely valuable to my organization in planning current and future events.** ~ Brett

I had the opportunity to collaborate with my local library for my education event, in which I read stories about littering and completed related crafts with children 5 and under. **By doing this, I was able to learn that a love of community and a willingness to help it can be taught at a young age,** and anyone who is willing to, can make a difference! ~ Ava

I was able to collaborate with my school to assist with my clean up. **Doing a clean up with my school community helped me realize what a community can do when we truly get together.** ~ Callum



We Partnered with Many Different Community Groups

Education Event Partners

- Lackawanna Heritage Valley Association
- Indiana Free Library
- Variety of School Teachers
- Schuylkill Keep It Pretty/Mandy Fitzpatrick
- Perkiomen Watershed Conservatory
- Hazleton Area Arts and Humanities Academy
- Conshohocken EAC
- South Hills Child Development Center, Inc.
- Upper Uwchlan Environmental Advisory Council
- Scranton Tomorrow Affiliate/Steve Ward
- State Park Rangers
- Local Fire Stations
- Scranton Preparatory School
- Urban Erie Community Development Corp.
- Scranton Prep's Gardening Club

Cleanup Event Partners

- Lackawanna Heritage Valley Conservation Association - John Marrow
- Whitemarsh Township
- Duff Park staff
- Schuylkill Keep It Pretty - Mandy Fitzpatrick
- Fairlane Village Mall Management
- Pottsville Area High School Ecology Club
- Perkiomen Watershed Conservatory
- Fairview Parks Recreation
- Hazleton Area Arts and Humanities Academy
- Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority
- Sewickley Creek Watershed Association



What's Next For Us

I plan to go into **Environmental Science** at Washington and Jefferson College! I am hoping to continue in that field and **build a career that allows me to help fix the environmental issues I care about!** ~ E

I plan to go into **Environmental Science and Engineering** at either Ohio State University or the University of Virginia. **I'm hoping to continue fighting for conservation efforts and contributing toward innovations that will improve our world for years to come.** ~ Katie

I hope to get accepted into an entry level 3+2 **Physician Assistant** program in the city. Although I may not be going into environmental science, **I definitely plan on doing all I can to improve our planet through extracurriculars.** ~ Peyton

I plan to study **Civil Engineering with a focus on Sustainable cities** at Penn State University. I love the outdoors and want to **help support the growing population while keeping our Earth beautiful.** ~Jaclyn

I plan to study **civil and environmental engineering** at the United States Coast Guard Academy. **The Coast Guard has an environmental cleanup and response branch which I am hoping to become involved in.** ~ Holden



Job Shadowing with DOW

Anna and Kumba met with employees from Dow and the Perkiomen Watershed Association to explore the wide range of environmentally related jobs available to them and learn about various environmental projects happening across Pennsylvania.

I attended the DOW job shadow and loved meeting different professionals and learning about various professions in the environmental field. From having conversations about the business side of sustainable products with Ramesh Iyer to how toxicologists work with designers to create safer products with Elizabeth Uhlhorn, I saw many aspects that play into the progress we make in our country. In addition, I learned about DOW itself from Meghan Leinhauser and got to experience the volunteering part of her job with fellow Young Ambassador Anna Oslikova. We helped clean plant pots at the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, and we also received a tour of the Dragonfly Farm from Jessie Kemper. **This experience taught me a lot about different careers and about several ways to care for the environment itself!** ~ Kumba



Job Shadowing with Columbia Gas, a NiSource Company

Holden and Anna met with Environmental Coordinators and Engineers and visited active work sites.

I went to Columbia Gas/NiSource for a job shadow. I had no idea there were so many environmental precautions taken during a pipeline project and in the oil and gas industry as a whole. My biggest takeaway was seeing that regardless of the industry, there are many jobs pertaining to environmental protection available. I specifically enjoyed seeing the job site and learning about different best management practices (BMPs) used, including silt fences, and storm drain covers. I also got the chance to speak with Cameron Thon, a civil engineer. As I am planning to become an engineer, it was super helpful to hear about his job and see the types of plans he worked on. ~ Holden



Young Ambassador Scholarship

The Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Young Ambassador Scholarship celebrates and honors one current Ambassador and one graduate who demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental, social and economic sustainability through academic pursuits to positively impact their community. Each recipient is awarded a \$1,000 merit-based scholarship.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Current Young Ambassador planning to enroll in a continuing education program.*
- Young Ambassador alum planning to enroll or currently enrolled in a continuing education program*.

*Continuing education programs include college, technical schools, certifications, and professional development programs.

Awardees:

Current Young Ambassador: **Kumba**, 11th grade, Montgomery Co

Young Ambassador Alum: **Shreyas**, 12th grade, Bucks Co





Congratulations Young Ambassador Class of 2025 and all the best for the future!



Pennsylvania
Department of Transportation

Alex, 10th grade, Chester Co
Ananya, 11th grade, Erie Co
Anna, 11th grade, Franklin Co
Anvi, 10th grade, Delaware Co
Ava, 11th grade, Indiana Co
Brett, 11th grade, Westmoreland Co
Callum, 10th grade, Schuylkill Co
E, 12th grade, Allegheny Co
Edie, 10th grade, Lackawanna Co
Emily, 12th grade, Westmoreland Co
Emmet, 11th grade, Schuylkill Co
Erica, 11th grade, Delaware Co
Ghizal, 11th grade, Bucks Co

Hannah, 11th grade, Dauphin Co
Holden, 12th grade, Erie Co
Jaclyn, 12th grade, Montgomery Co
Joy, 10th grade, Lackawanna Co
Katie, 12th grade, Westmoreland Co
Kumba, 11th grade, Montgomery Co
Masa, 11th grade, Erie Co
Naba, 11th grade, Delaware Co
Noori, 11th grade, Chester Co
Olivia, 11th grade, Montgomery Co
Peyton, 11th grade, Lackawanna Co
Silvia, 10th grade, Erie Co
Sonya, 12th grade, Chester Co

