

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Kids Go Camping to Learn Conservation

Oregon Zoo program opens nature to urban kids

As a small child, Troy Frison always liked the zoo, so when his mentor at the Boys & Girls Club recommended him for the Oregon Zoo's Urban Nature Overnights, he was excited.

"UNO opened my mind to a lot more things," Frison said. "I was stuck on sports growing up. This program opened my mind about conservation and nature."

This summer, for the 15th year in a row, young campers will be pitching tents at local parks much like Frison did in third grade.

Since its launching, UNO has provided camping trips for 4,561 urban youths, and school-year programming for 1,054 urban youths. The program, designed to actively engage historically under-represented Portland area youth in outdoor recreation and conservation, is a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service



PHOTO BY CARLI DAVIDSON, COURTESY OF THE OREGON ZOO
A group of campers hits the trail at Oxbow Regional Park with conservation educator Troy Frison and Urban Nature Overnights coordinator Jody Van Riper. The Oregon Zoo's award-winning UNO program is celebrating its 15th anniversary this summer.

and other community partners. "This is specifically a program for low-income, ethnically and culturally diverse kids," said Jody Van Riper, who has been running UNO for 14 of its 15

years. "And it's part of the zoo's goal to reach out to community members with our conservation messages. It's fun to get kids outside and away from electronics to open their eyes to the natural world."

Van Riper said one of the many ways UNO is successful is that young participants frequently return as teens to mentor new students in the program.

Frison is one of the returning teens. At 15, he applied and was accepted to the Zoo Animal Presenters, or ZAP, program a three-year paid internship for low-income, diverse teenagers. ZAP aims to provide job skills, positive youth development, and an introduction to conservation education.

Now 19 and after completing his three years in the ZAP program, he was hired on as a UNO staff member for the year.

UNO participants are identified by community partner organizations. To find out more, visit oregonzoo.org.

Washington Park Shuttle Begins

Washington Park has a new, free park-wide shuttle for summer allowing visitors to park once or to take TriMet or Max and then explore the entire park by hopping on and off at any of the nine stops.

The Washington Park Free Shuttle runs every 15 minutes, every day, seven days a week, from

9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

"The daily free shuttle is an amazing addition to the park, and allows visitors to explore this beautiful place without having to worry about driving or re-parking to get from one venue to another," says Ruth Shelly, executive director of Portland Children's Museum

and Chair of the Washington Park Transportation Management. "This service fulfills a promise we made to the public to provide a free park-wide shuttle and is a huge step in improving public access to the park, reducing congestion, and lessening environmental impact."



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