

# Yale University

## President's Public Service Fellowship

### Proposal for Fellowship Placement Summer 2023

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#### Organization information

<i>Name of organization</i>	Common Ground/New Haven Ecology Project
<i>Full street address</i>	358 Springside Ave, New Haven, CT 06511
<i>Website or link to social media page</i>	<a href="http://www.commongroundct.org">www.commongroundct.org</a>

#### PPSF Fellow's direct supervisor

*The supervisor must be available to supervise Fellow on a daily basis.*

<i>Name</i>	Rebecca Holcombe
<i>Title</i>	Director of Children's and Community Programs
<i>Cell phone number</i>	203-687-5325
<i>E-mail address</i>	<a href="mailto:rholcombe@commongroundct.org">rholcombe@commongroundct.org</a>

**Placement dates (8-11 weeks between Tuesday, May 30, 2023 through Friday, August 11, 2023)**

June 19 - August 11 required, option to add weeks before June 19

**Are placement dates flexible? Are there any dates on which your Fellow must work?**

June 19 - August 11 required, option to add weeks before June 19

**Proposed work schedule (work week should equal and not exceed 37.5 hours per week)**

Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 3:30 PM

**Organization description (mission statement, population served. 1,000 characters or less)**

Common Ground is a center for learning and leadership, inviting people across ages and identities to connect to their urban environment, build community, grow into their full potential, and contribute to a just and sustainable world.

Common Ground connects farm, forest, and city through our High School, Urban Farm, and Environmental Education Center. Our campus includes production and education gardens, farm animals, and creative playspaces for children. Located at the base of West Rock Ridge, we have direct access to forests with hiking trails, wildlife, and diverse natural habitats.

We serve the greater New Haven community, and have a deep commitment to making our site, programs, and practices inclusive of and accessible to all people.

Summer camp serves children ages 4 - 14 from New Haven and surrounding communities, including substantial financial aid support to include children from low income households.

**Q19. Write a 1-2 sentence summary of the work that the Fellow would be conducting (500 characters or less).**

Join us at our farm and nature camp for children ages 4 – 14! Fellows work as leaders and mentors, caring for campers as we cook, play, hike, garden, build forts, make nature art, care for animals, play games, enjoy campfires, and make summer memories.

The weeks before June 19 are primarily farm work (planting, weeding, greenhouse care, helping with animal care, etc) and some opportunity to support children's programs. Lots of photos at [commongroundcamp](#) on Instagram!

**Q20. Write a more complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow.**

Common Ground's summer camp provides a diverse group of children with a fun, safe summer experience, emphasizing building friendships and developing an appreciation for the natural world. Campers experience nature as an exciting place to explore, and discover how people, food, and the environment are interconnected. The campers come together on "common ground" as they discover that we all have the responsibility and opportunity to help protect the Earth. We welcome an energetic community of about 250 children and 60 staff each week.

Making camp financially accessible to low income families is essential to our mission. We provide over \$30,000 in scholarships each summer for campers, and we work hard to get the word out to underserved New Haven neighborhoods and schools.

Campers participate in both structured and unstructured activities on the farm and in the forest. Depending on personal interests and skills, a Fellow might lead farm animal care, take campers on a nature hike, lead a group in cooking a snack from the garden, be creative with recycled or natural materials, lead games that foster friendship and cooperation, explore the stream and catch crawdads, or coach a child on how to hold a chicken! Each day is different, but Fellows will always have some assigned stations or activities and may also offer daily activities for small groups based on their interests and experience.

Daily work involves being an integral part of this community, teaching, playing, mentoring, getting dirty, eating strawberries, rounding up chickens, bandaging knees, and making memories. Many Fellows have worked in a support and assistant teacher role, so having significant experience with caring for and teaching children is not an essential skill – Fellows work in partnership with our experienced team of professional Environmental Educators!

One outcome we aim for in camp is for positive experiences with outdoor learning and play to lead to children thinking of themselves as nature lovers who care about environmental sustainability and who understand how nature connection can support their own physical and mental health. Over the years we have seen program participants make college and career choices around science and environmental sustainability that they say were influenced by their time as campers. We have seen campers ask their family to garden or compost at home based on their experiences at camp, and campers who bring their families to West Rock to enjoy family time on the trails. Our Yale Fellows help create these outcomes as they join us in mentoring and leading children in positive experiences in nature!

The duties of the Fellow are to participate fully as part of the staff team, serving an amazing group of children who we seek to engage in meaningful, safe, fun learning and play in nature.

**List specific skills/experience required for the project**

Enthusiasm for working with children and supporting individual and group needs  
Interest in helping children engage with the natural world

Willingness and ability to work outdoors in all weather, including summer rain and heat and to be physically active for most of an 8 hour day.

Social and emotional capacity to work in a role that requires patience, lots of social engagement with children, and strong communication skills.

**Additional requirements (e.g. a car or weekend working hours). If a car is required, include information regarding parking arrangements and mileage reimbursement.**

No additional requirements. Our campus is accessible by car, bike, and city bus.

**Briefly describe any work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your organization in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, describe any work that Yale students have done with your organization.**

Common Ground and the New Haven Ecology Project have been fortunate to host Yale Fellows for over a decade, and our site and our students have greatly benefited from their contributions.

Yale PPSF participants have worked in camp and also put in many hours with our Farm and Development teams. Fellows have worked with our teenage Youth Crew, helped us design new publicity materials for our market stand, hosted Saturday Open Farm Day, developed environmental and food justice curricula, and worked as tutors for Common Ground High School.