Proposal for In-Person Fellowship Placement • Summer 2022

If conditions allow, PPSF will offer in-person fellowships in the summer of 2022. In the event that in-person summer placements are not approved by Yale University, prospective sites will be notified and asked to modify proposals to reflect remote work.

- Organization: Common Ground
- Organization’s street address: 358 Springside Ave, New Haven
- Website: www.commongroundct.org
- Name and title of person who will be the Fellow’s direct supervisor (the supervisor must be available to supervise Fellow on a daily basis): Rebecca Holcombe
- Phone number and e-mail address of proposed direct supervisor (please note: during the application process, we encourage prospective Fellows to contact organizations directly with any questions about organization placements or projects): rholcombe@commongroundct.org, 203-389-4333 x 1213
- Placement dates (8-11 weeks between Tuesday, May 31 and Friday, August 12, 2022): June 20 – August 12 (8 weeks) are essential dates for summer camp. Fellows are welcome to add on any dates from May 31 – June 19 if desired.
- Are placement dates flexible? If so, please describe: Somewhat. The 8 weeks of summer camp are essential. Days before June 20 are flexible.
- Proposed work schedule (placements should be equivalent to full-time and not more than 37.5 hours/week): 8:00 AM – 3:30 PM, Monday – Friday OR 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM (leaving at 3:30 PM on Tuesdays to accommodate Tuesday Fellowship meetings). Fellow may choose their preferred schedule.

Placement Description

- Organization description (mission statement, population served. 150 words 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 natural play spaces 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.
• Write a 1-2 sentence summary of the proposed work for a summer 2022 Fellow:

Join us at our farm and nature camp for children ages 4 – 13! Fellows will participate in direct service with children as they cook with food from the farm, enjoy campfires, build forts, hike, wade in streams, and play in nature. The weeks before June 20 are primarily farm work (planting, weeding, greenhouse care, helping with animal care, etc). Lots of photos at commongroundcamp on Instagram!

• Write a more complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow. (Suggested length: one to two pages.)

Common Ground’s summer camp provides a diverse group of children with an engaging summer experience, emphasizing building friendships and developing an appreciation for the natural world. Campers experience nature as an exciting place to explore and to 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. Over the years, the camp has grown from a small group of campers and staff to an energetic community of over 300 children and staff each week. Covid protocols saw us offering a much smaller camp in 2020 and 2021. Overall camp capacity and Covid protocols are not yet established for 2022, however we anticipate continuing to be fully in-person and mostly or entirely outdoors. We are licensed and inspected by the Office of Early Childhood and are in compliance with all health and safety measures.

Making camp financially accessible to low income families is essential to our mission. We provide over $20,000 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. Fellows usually work in an assistant teacher role, so having significant experience with planning lessons and teaching children is not an essential skill –Fellows work in partnership with our experienced team of professional Environmental Educators.

The children who participate in camp also benefit from the breaking down of barriers erected by race, neighborhood, and socioeconomic status. Common Ground Camp serves a diverse group of campers from all over the city and surrounding towns, offering campers the opportunity to form friendships with children that they may never have met outside of camp. Many of these children keep in touch with their camp friends all year long, thus connecting neighborhoods and families and emphasizing the idea that all things (and people) are interconnected.

Yale Fellows are also important role models for our high school students who work as counselors in the camp. Getting to know college students who are having a variety of experiences in higher education helps our students think about what path they might be excited to follow after high school. In addition,
the participation of a Yale Fellow in camp helps us keep our camp costs lower by providing funding for a staff position. This allows us to dedicate more funds towards our scholarship program, making an amazing summer at Common Ground available to a diverse group of children from across the City of New Haven.

The duties of the Fellow are as described above – participate fully as part of the staff team serving an amazing group of children who are joining us to play and learn in nature!

List specific skills/experience required for the project:

- Interest in helping children engage with the natural world
- Interest in engaging with Common Ground’s mission and commitment to equity, diversity and environmental sustainability
- Commitment to child centered teaching and behavior management, including the ability to be patient, nurturing, and supportive even when that feels difficult
- Ability and desire to work outside in summer weather, including heat and rain
- Ability and desire to engage in physical activity including carrying a backpack with supplies, hiking, navigating uneven terrain, and being physically active for most of the day (we are happy to discuss accommodations for physical activity restrictions as needed)
- Demonstrated reliability, punctuality, and responsible behavior at previous jobs
- Ability to work closely with a staff team including excellent communication, a team based mindset, and comfort with being flexible and adaptable when plans change
- Commitment to inclusive work with a staff team and children who are diverse in many ways, including race, socioeconomic status, ability and disability, gender and gender identity, and culture. Our campers and staff come from many kinds of families and life experiences and we strive to honor and celebrate the things we all have in common as well as the ways we are different.

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

All staff are required to be fully vaccinated for Covid-19.

- Briefly describe the 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 in the garden and at our Farmer’s Market stand. Fellows have worked with our High School 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.