



Green to Our Corps

Official newsletter of the Greenest Region Corps



Greenest Region Corps

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Who we are

Across the Chicago Region, communities are voluntarily taking steps to become more sustainable and help make their communities attractive places to live and work. These steps are outlined in the consensus goals of the [Greenest Region Compact \(GRC\)](#), which helps to guide the 129 Greenest Region Compact communities who are working every day as stewards of the environment, community and local economic vitality.

The [Greenest Region Corps \(GRCorps\)](#) is a partnership between the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and AmeriCorps that started in 2018 and pairs enthusiastic volunteers with GRC communities for about 11 months to lead sustainability projects. GRCorps members provide critical service to many communities that do not have the capacity or resources to dedicate significant staff time to sustainability issues. Since October, 12 volunteers are implementing projects in these communities and partner organizations around the region.

Meet the members



Brittanie Giroux, City of Evanston

Brittanie is currently stationed at the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center in Evanston, IL. She is working with the Sustainability Department to continue building and implementing sustainability initiatives in support of Evanston's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP). In this role, she has facilitated waste reduction workshops, created climate change educational material, and continued working on the composting program for city facilities. In the coming months, Brittanie hopes to better understand energy efficient building practices and revamp Evanston's sustainable business recognition program.

Leslie Hernandez, Village of Oak Park

The majority of Leslie's work focuses on organizing energy data for all municipal facilities into the EPA's EnergyStar Portfolio Management database and benchmarking the Village's greenhouse gas emissions with respect to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy's (GCoM's) reporting framework. Along with this data analysis, she assists the Sustainability Coordinator with various initiatives that range from the execution of a composting program within Village Hall, to help with the facilitation of community events and festivals that observe or celebrate sustainability, such as: Oak Park's Green Awards, Earth Day, Plastic Free July, and Oak Park's Food Waste Awareness Week.



Robin Grooms, Village of Hawthorn Woods

Robin graduated from Northern Illinois University in May 2019 with a degree in Environmental Policy and is very enthusiastic about serving as a Greenest Region Corps Member. She shares that it has been a fantastic way to apply her studies and work history into practical application assisting the Village of Hawthorn Woods. Her current projects include: Audubon International Incorporation, Sustainability Plan Formulation, Aging in Place Initiatives, Environmental Education Content and Outreach, and Conservation Planning for Local Nature Preserves.

Meet the members

Julia Linares, Cook County

As a resident of Cook County, Julia is excited and encouraged to support her fellow residents and neighbors. Since October, she has been delegated the task of creating outreach materials (flyers, guides, social media posts, etc.) covering a wide variety of environmental issues, like waste diversion and energy efficiency. She also tables at various community events, assists in energy audits of their own facilities, and performs research concerning all facets of the department's environmental work. She looks forward to expanding the reach the county has with its municipalities and continuing to support the sustainability goals and efforts made throughout the region.

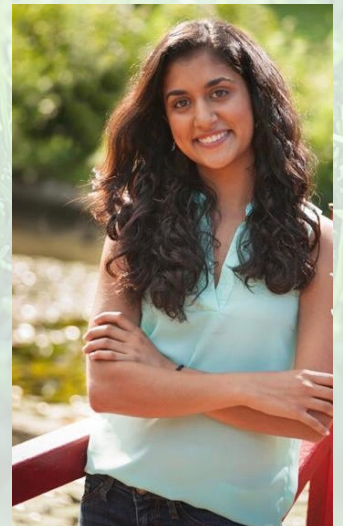


Ivy Klee, Solid Waste Agency of Lake County

Ivy is serving with the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO) for her GRC AmeriCorps term. SWALCO helps manage solid waste efforts for 45 municipalities in Lake County. Ivy is excited to learn more about the waste management industry and market this year, and hopes to help make her county a cleaner, greener place. Current projects she is working on include an online local recycling guidelines website tool, neighborhood recycling cart tagging programs, compost and recycling initiatives with local businesses and restaurants, implementing waste stations in schools and a Lake County waste audit.

Maya Dutta, City of Waukegan

Maya is working on sustainability initiatives with the City of Waukegan's Mayor's Office for her year of service. Currently, one of the main projects she has been working on includes spearheading the development of a Sustainability Plan for the City. During the planning process, Maya has been coordinating efforts and initiatives with department heads within City Hall. Among other things, she is providing information and research to increase energy efficiency standards of building codes, advocating for a local bike share program, and garnering input from the community about their sustainability priorities. Maya looks forward to expanding upon sustainability work in Waukegan and hopes to provide a useful roadmap for initiatives for the future.



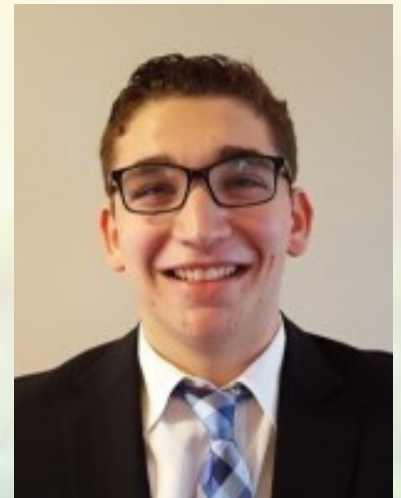


Charmaine John, Village of Northbrook

The Village has adopted sustainability as one of its top priorities for the year, which poses an exciting opportunity for Charmaine to help coordinate efforts both internally and externally in recognizing the role of sustainability across all municipal operations. In Charmaine's first weeks of serving, she helped secure plastic film reduction programs such as recycling and bag share. On an ongoing basis, she updates the Village sustainability webpage. A future project includes converting Village facility and streetlights to energy efficient alternatives through available grants. For the upcoming year of her service, she hopes to lay the groundwork through which the Village may set and proficiently achieve net zero and circular economy goals.

Daniel Gonzalez, City of Highland Park

Daniel works at the City of Highland Park, a municipality that is focused on formalizing and implementing a new three-year update to the sustainability plan. Highland Park is promoting composting as a resource to residents and business owners and encouraging sustainable ways of living to its residents. Projects Daniel has started include deconstruction education materials, sustainable purchasing educational materials for residents and businesses, waste diversion programs for businesses and multi-family homes, and connecting sustainable resources to the community using the Sustainability HP Map.



Katya Obrez, Lake County

Katya is assigned to the Sustainability Program of the Lake County Administrator's Office, which is responsible for overseeing the County's sustainability initiatives and providing staff support to the Energy & Environment Committee of the Lake County Board. Some of the projects she is working on include assisting with the County waste audit, editing and updating the sustainability website, researching local food committees and councils, and determining how the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Greenest Region Compact (GRC) may integrate with existing County plans.

Cheryl Scott, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

Cheryl brings a background in communications and local government to her work at the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus in Chicago. She is primarily helping to design an EV Ready Program. Cheryl has coordinated listening sessions across the region to hear the considerations that municipalities have about purchasing EVs or installing EV charging stations. After gathering input, she will collaborate to create an EV Ready Checklist for municipalities and an EV Buying Decision Guide. Other projects of Cheryl's include coordinating Mayors Caucus Environment Committee meetings and assisting with communications and social media on topics such as energy efficient building codes or solar energy programs.



Cheryl Watson, Village of Hazel Crest

With a focus to engage with the Village of Hazel Crest and frontline communities in their efforts to develop an equitable, just and sustainable community vision, Cheryl Watson plans to educate the community about potential environmental or public health risks related to climate change hazards. To advocate for safe drinking water and clean air, she has convened with elected officials to brainstorm strategies to eliminate the risk of lead in Illinois drinking water. Her most recent accomplishment is the brokering of a technical assistance partnership between the Village of Hazel Crest and the Metropolitan Planning Council Drinking Water 1-2-3 Academy to locate, inventory and document the number of lead service lines in Hazel Crest. This process will position the village for the next steps towards appropriating funding to further plan for a lead-free village.

Haley Crim, Village of Park Forest

Haley is serving in the Sustainability Office of the Village of Park Forest. Her work is guided by the village's new Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, adopted in April 2019 with the help of Park Forest's first GRCorps member, Andrew Brown. Haley is primarily working on energy issues, including securing access to renewable energy for all residents through a municipal aggregation agreement, encouraging the installation of solar arrays, and promoting energy efficiency measures. She is also conducting a greenhouse gas inventory of the village and assisting the Sustainability Coordinator with waste management, anti-idling, and local food initiatives.



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