

# More Power to You

## When Teens Make Decisions

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Want to achieve mission and meet your conservation action goals? Put teenagers on the front line and in the driver's seat. The Ocean Project found that Americans see themselves as green but don't know what action to take. They also see teens as knowledgeable about the environment. With tools in their hands and your support at their backs, teens will develop messages, build programs and get guests to commit to taking conservation action.



When Lincoln Park Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden partnered under a grant from The Ocean Project, leaders wondered if the teens would be able to brand a campaign that would fit the missions of both organizations. They did: OWN: One With Nature, a great fit for partners and funder.

[www.facebook.com/OneWithNatureTeenz](http://www.facebook.com/OneWithNatureTeenz)



## Inspiration to Action: Engaging Youth to Create Climate Change Messaging

The Northwest Zoo and Aquarium Alliance brought together 50 teens from five organizations for an intensive 24-hour climate change summit to build a youth leader network. Evaluations conducted across NWZAA organizations identified youth volunteers as the best delivery mechanism for climate change, but found they lacked confidence and knowledge. Through cross-organization teen-driven planning, youth will pledge their leadership; however, structured time and mentor attention are needed to keep them engaged post-summit.



A teen branding team developed "Live enLIGHTened" and dubbed the cross-organization teens Northwest Beacons.



Teens decided on six conservation actions for consistent recommendation to guests: use reusable canteens; turn off lights/unplug electronics; wash clothes in cold water; buy locally; take alternative or public transit; and push for green municipal regulations.

Youth developed robust collaborative projects for conservation action: on-site youth games, locally grown food access for communities and a superhero student-family-teacher activity.

### Recommendations:

- Provide facilitation so youth and staff can participate equally.
- Give teens the lead.
- Provide structured time and ongoing mentorship to accomplish goals.

## Structure and Support for Youth Success

Youth are future conservation leaders, hungry to make a difference; however, they need structure and support along their path. Seattle Aquarium reorganized its education offerings and signals expectations for the campaign work by naming that program "Ocean Advocates." Youth use current skills while pursuing new interests and expanding knowledge about the ocean and conservation through a suite of service learning opportunities, including fundraising.



Youth designed a fundraising and giving program, learning how philanthropy and responsible giving can be a way to advocate for the ocean. Here, youth staffed a face-painting station and raised \$1,036 over two weekends. During summer 2013, teens raised and donated \$5,000 to conservation causes.

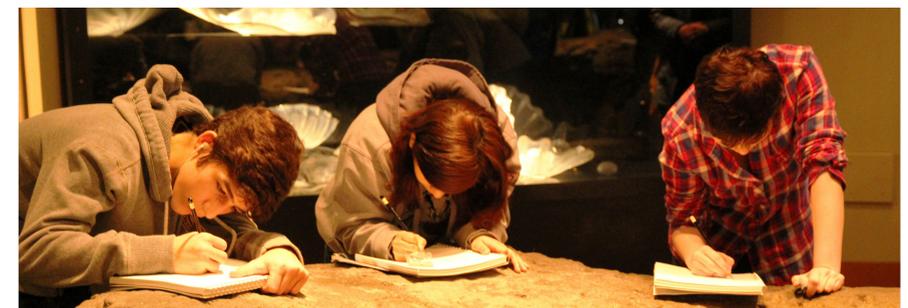


Puguet Sound: We Love You campaign members write ocean-themed blog posts, curate social media efforts, plan community events like beach cleanups and work with adult mentors to create multimedia content. Youth learn persuasion, communication and planning skills while advocating for the ocean.

[www.facebook.com/psweloveyou](http://www.facebook.com/psweloveyou)

### Recommendations:

- Provide quality mentoring as teens pursue passions and build skills.
- Allow youth to pursue work that makes a difference.
- Celebrate the work.
- Help youth develop an audience for the work.

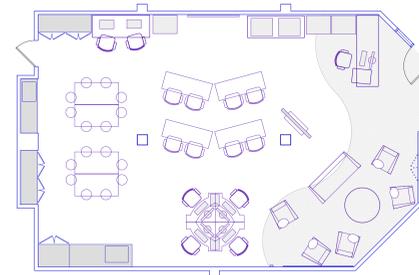


Working with professional artists, youth learned artistry and developed online and traveling shows to raise awareness of conservation issues. Youth artists leveraged their work as a tool for advocacy.

## Shedd Aquarium's New Teen Learning Lab: Teens as Co-creators and Decision Makers

Shedd Aquarium paired its years of experience engaging teens with teens' own voices — to co-create a digital-media-enriched space. The Teen Learning Lab will build 21st-century learning skills and increase environmental and scientific literacy.

This physical, accessible space provides an infrastructure for teens to self-direct customized learning. Despite the hurdles to carve out geography in a tight footprint and find resources for equipment and staff, a teen hangout space became a reality and is opening this week. Teens engaged all along the path from concept to implementation.



Staff empower teens to be decision makers on space design and for each component, including tools, scheduling, access and programs.



Shedd fosters relationships with teens who have an interest in the natural world.



Teen experiences promote critical thinking, skill building and inspiration through peer-to-peer mentoring and collaboration.

### Recommendations:

- Engage teens in decision making about their programs and needs.
- Use the process to engage and recruit new teens, build 21st-century skills, create staff buy-in, and forge strong relationships with the teen community.