

## The Legacy of Stewardship

by Rebecca Patterson-Markowitz



On May 14, 2016, four students from the Patagonia Youth Enrichment Center (PYEC) were excited to return to the Arizona Trail at the Harshaw Road Trailhead. This time we would focus on the role of stewardship with help from trail steward, Zay Hartigan. Along with Steve Coleman and Arizona Trail Association Seeds of Stewardship educator, Treven Hooker, this mighty crew intended to get their hands dirty.



**Juan grubbs a cat claw**

Once everyone met up at the PYEC we eagerly made our way toward the trail. Zay talked to everyone about his work and commitment as an AZT steward and demonstrated how to be safe when using tools. He also explained the idea and importance of “trail-speak.” For example when walking around a crewmember that is wielding a tool, be sure to say, “bumping by!” and keep a safe distance.

Taking the lead up the trail was Amaris, the youngest of the group. It wasn’t long before we came to a thick tangle of catclaw and mesquite branches that were encroaching on the trail. Zay often maintains his passage on horseback, so the students got a different perspective of how an equestrian rides and maintains the AZT.

Students worked hard brushing and grubbing out brush and trees. And as we worked and chatted, one young participant told Treven that she “wished that she did more hiking and stuff like this,” but her mom unfortunately didn’t like to get outside much.

Making our way farther up the trail, students had an opportunity to learn how to clear out drainages filled with rock and sediment, but by mid-day the heat began to slow everyone down so we ended the workday at 1:30 p.m.

After hiking back out to the trailhead, we had ice water and drinks waiting, and everyone enjoyed a cool-down lunch, sharing some snacks and stories about wasp and bee encounters on the trail. Also, as a special thanks, everyone got an AZT bandana for their hard work.



**Christina brushing mesquite**

In the end, Zay put it best when he thanked the students. He encouraged them to consider participating and supporting other community trail projects he is working on, because what they accomplished today on the trail is part of a legacy that their children and other future generations of Patagonians will be able to enjoy and share.



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