

THE PROJECT

Visions of You was developed as an opportunity for students to visually document their internship with the NPS. This project provides a way for students to meaningfully explore and learn about their transition from an academic environment to a professional experience with the NPS. For most Eagle Rock interns, this is the students' first substantial interaction with the NPS.

Interns are provided a digital camera and direction in the form of weekly themes. The themes were "First Impressions," "Who are you," "Safety," and "Show Your Rocky Mountain National Park." The directions are short and simple: Interns are asked to take honest pictures that represent the theme and express something meaningful to them. There are no expectations or right answers. Each intern is required to pick photos they are willing to display, share with the others interns and staff, and explain why they took the picture and what it meant to them.

Internships were more than just a summer experience. They became the first step on a new pathway of career opportunities in the future.



Interns recognized the emphasis placed on safety for park staff, volunteers, and visitors.

"My job revolves around safety whether its in the parking lot directing traffic or informing foreign hikers of trail conditions. I use safety so often I find myself trying to inform visitors on safety in and out of my gray and greens."
- Natalie

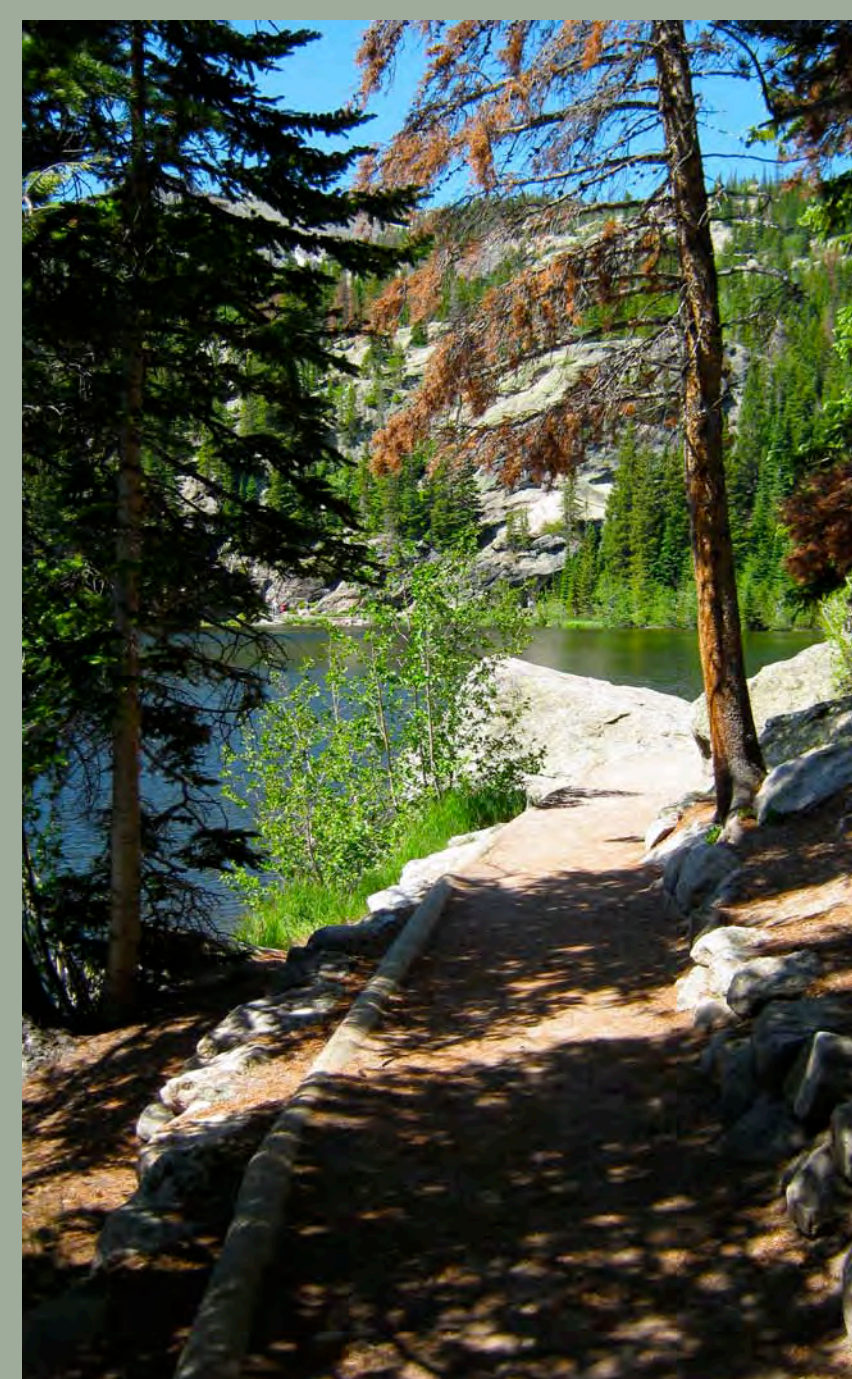


Interns were surprised by the personal connection they made with workers from different generations.

"Working trails challenged me with leadership necessary to lead and teach people that were younger and older than me."
- Rafael



"The NPS taught me many things about how to do my assigned job, work with many different people and about the impact I had on the world around me. I believe I am prepared to work in just about any field I set my eyes on. The NPS has provided me with the skills to be successful in whatever path I choose."
- Jon'Ya



Background

Visions of You - Picture Your NPS is part of the professional development curriculum for the Rocky Mountain National Park Eagle Rock Internship Program. *Visions of You* is a way for students to visually explore, reflect, and interact with the National Park Service and the park. The project takes advantage of students' comfort levels by using familiar technology (digital cameras and computers) to personally connect them with the unfamiliar - national parks.

Visions of You is inspired by several university projects developed to support first-generation college students. These projects help students adjust to a new environment and make a smooth transition to a challenging new culture and environment.

Three Main Projects Goals

1. Encourage interns to actively see, experience, and connect to the park
2. Provide interns with opportunities to express their creativity and observations of the park
3. Provide feedback to the park about the student's perceptions related to their internship

What We Learned

The *Visions of You* project has resulted in great benefits, surprises and unexpected outcomes for everyone involved

Perspective and Buy-In - Interns enjoyed taking and sharing their photos. The project provided them an area of control and a sense of buy-in for the internship.

Feedback - photographs became a great form of feedback about the park, the internship program and the interns perspective and interpretation of the experience.

Personal Connection - Ultimately, everyone involved was touched by the program. The interns had a great scrapbook of their experience to share and remember. And park staff were reminded of the beautiful places where they work and the youthful exuberance of new NPS interns.

Visions of You – Picture Your NPS: Helping Youth Personally Connect to Parks through Photography

Ben Baldwin, Research Learning Specialist, Continental Divide Research Learning Center, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO, ben_baldwin@nps.gov
Amanda Christman, Professional Development Center Coordinator, Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, CO, achristman@eaglerockschool.org
Jon Anderson, Outdoor Education Instructional Specialist, Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, CO, janderson@eaglerockschool.org



National Park Service
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Rocky Mountain National Park



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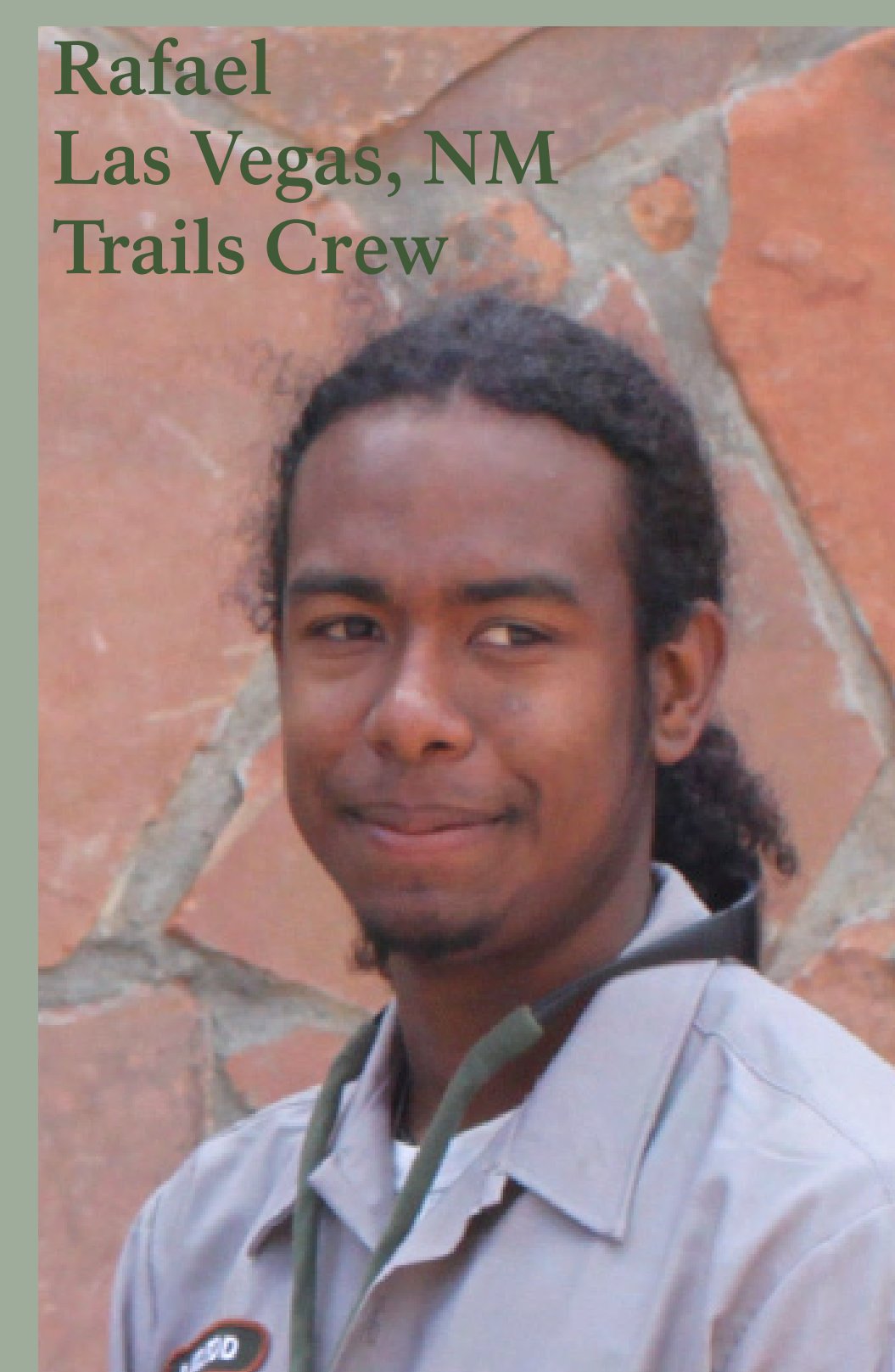
Jon'Ya
Stratford, CT
Recycling Crew



Natalie
Park Jerves, NY
Park Ranger



Robin
Chicago, IL
Restoration Team



Rafael
Las Vegas, NM
Trails Crew



Cara
New York, NY
Restoration Team



Hector
Los Angeles, CA
Auto Shop