



Late winter storms have delayed the opening of some roads and facilities.  
 For updated information, visit [www.nps.gov/seki/playourvisit/currentcond.htm](http://www.nps.gov/seki/playourvisit/currentcond.htm)

# SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

## & SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

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## *Giving and getting*

*Give as good as you get.*

This expression, which describes treating others as badly as you get treated, is getting turned upside down at Sequoia and Kings Canyon.

Consider one case in particular:

Last year, a group of young men began giving to give to the park. They repaired, sanded, and painted the amphitheater and every picnic table in one campground. At the park's native-plant nursery, thousands of seedlings owe their improved chances of survival to this group.

After heavy rains threatened to swamp a huge meadow-restoration project, they pitched in. They carried heavy erosion-control blankets over 1/4 mile to the site. That done, they drove 1000 wooden stakes into the ground to hold the blankets in place. Without their help, this ground-breaking project might not have weathered the storm.

They also tackled graffiti removal in the low-elevation areas of Sequoia Park. Rather than harsh chemicals and abrasives that could damage plants and wildlife, they developed a new system: Biodegradable citrus-based solvents, plus elbow grease, wiped these beautiful areas clean.

Who is this group? *Courage to Change*, a residential school, works with young former gang members who have overcome more challenges than most adults have faced in a lifetime. Many arrive courtesy of the court system. Their marching orders: turn your life around.



*Courage-to-Change cadets, the highest achievers at a unique residential school, revamped popular Potwisha Campground and other areas — as volunteers.*

Fortunately for everyone involved, their choices now include volunteering regularly at these parks. They gave more than a thousand hours of work last year. For free. In 100-degree-plus heat. The park and its visitors clearly benefited. In fact, these young men received the top Group Volunteer Project Award for the western national parks.

Prior to this, national parks felt physically and culturally alien to these young men. Natural areas played little or no part in their lives. What did they get out of their volunteer work in such a place?

“It helped me learn new skills, use proper tools and to understand the forest better.” “It helped me to

build leadership skills.” “It made me very happy and proud of myself.” “It helped me realize that volunteer work actually makes a difference.”

It surely makes a difference to the parks. Now the program is expanding to include more educational opportunities for these hard workers. It seems they got as good as they gave.

**Interested in volunteering?** See <http://volunteer.gov/gov/> for information about volunteering in government agencies throughout the country; apply via that website. These parks, which must plan projects well in advance, need the following help: camp hosts, visitor-center assistants, native-plant care, and river rovers and trail trekkers who help visitors to enjoy the parks safely. Volunteers must be self-sufficient and willing to give as good as they get!