

GREAT SMOKY
MOUNTAINS
INSTITUTE AT
TREMONT

Community Partner Spotlight: Knoxville

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at
Tremont
April 2019



Overview of Tremont Institute's Work with Knoxville

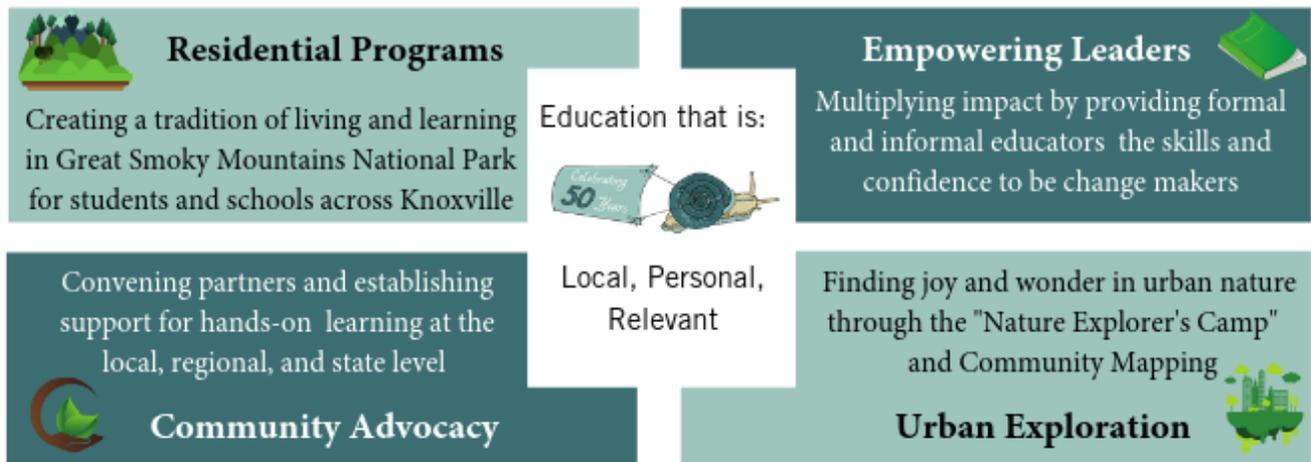
Who is Tremont Institute?

Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont (Tremont Institute) delivers experiential learning experiences for youth, adults, and educators through programs that promote self-discovery, critical thinking, and effective teaching. From our home in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tremont Institute welcomes participants from our local communities and across the nation for experiences that foster curiosity, develop a sense of place, investigate the biodiversity that sustains all life, and cultivate a stewardship ethic that will influence lifelong decision-making.

Why are we working in Knoxville?

Tremont Institute is committed to ensuring equitable access to experiential learning experiences for Knoxville residents that are culturally appropriate, personally relevant, and welcoming for all. As the closest major city to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Knoxville provides the opportunity for Tremont Institute to partner with a diverse set of schools, businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits to ensure that transformative hands-on learning experiences are integrated into everyday life. With 50 years of experience, Tremont Institute is uniquely positioned to support Knoxville in this endeavor at multiple levels while empowering students and community members to discover, protect, and learn in the incredible nature spaces of East Tennessee.

Connecting Knoxville to Nature through...



Tremont Institute's Knoxville work will be successful when...

- Tremont Institute is seen as a resource that builds upon the great work already being accomplished in classrooms.
- Nature-based learning experiences at Tremont Institute and in local green spaces are woven into school tradition and integrated into school budgets.
- Experiential learning is mainstreamed into schoolyards through the energy and efforts of a cadre of skilled teachers, educators, and champions for experiential learning.
- Widespread and affordable pathways for repeat and lifelong relationships with Knoxville-based participants, from elementary school through adulthood, are available and streamlined with park and partner programs.

Residential Programs in Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Residential programs in Great Smoky Mountains National Park provide the cornerstone for most of Tremont Institute's relationship with Knoxville schools. For students from Knoxville, this means getting out of the city for 3-5 days to experience moments of wonder and discovery among the towering trees, rushing waterfalls, and peaceful trails of the Great Smoky Mountains. For schools, participating in a residential program at Tremont Institute builds upon classroom and schoolyard learning, fostering student excitement, joy, and social and emotional growth. Later on in life, Tremont Institute offers internships and employment for those dedicated to giving back to the East Tennessee community.

In 2018/2019, Tremont Institute facilitated 1,140 days and 760 nights in the national park for 380 students

Fulton High School	Christenberry Elementary
Bearden High School	Lonsdale Elementary
South Doyle Middle School	Tate's School of Discovery
Grace Christian	Concord Christian
Sarah Moore Greene Elementary	Creative Learning Academy
	Homeschool Cooperative

"This trip to Tremont was one of the best weeks of my life. It honestly changed my life because I was able to build good relationships with friends."
-Fulton High School Student-

Residential Program Spotlight:

Fulton High School Environmental and Community Leaders Fellowship

- The Environmental and Community Leaders Fellowship empowers Fulton High School young adults from diverse, urban backgrounds to create equitable access to outdoor opportunities.
- Fellows have educated more than 1000 members of the public over two years during events in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and Knoxville.
- Participants hiked 357 miles in 2018 - or almost the equivalent of walking from Knoxville to Memphis.
- During a community environmental stewardship day, fellows removed 45 bags of trash from First Creek in North Knoxville.

PATHWAYS OF LEARNING FOR KNOXVILLE RESIDENTS



Summer Camp
Ages 4 - 17

Nature Explorer's Camp
1st - 5th grade



Residential Program
4th - 12th grade



Environmental and Community Leaders Fellowship
11th & 12th grade



University of Tennessee Urban Multicultural Cohort
Graduate students



College and early career internships



CAC AmeriCorps



Careers in nonprofits and environmental fields



Teacher Professional Development



Community-building with Experiential Education Advocates



Empowering Educational Leaders

To magnify the impact of residential programs and to get steadily closer to a world in which outdoor experiential learning happens every day, Tremont Institute empowers educational leaders, providing the skills, confidence, and practice that enables these changemakers to connect their students and community to nature. By spreading best-practices in experiential outdoor education, Tremont Institute is able to reach thousands of additional students and community members while building a network of outdoor learning advocates.

"By coming to Tremont and learning how to start open ended questions...I have had a breakthrough in my career."

-South Doyle Middle Educator-

Educator Trainings at Tremont Institute

- Tremont Institute's flagship training, Teacher Escape Weekend, reaches hundreds of educators each year.
- Additional trainings are often more focused and address subjects such as climate change, birds, and lichen.
- Educators prepare for their school residential program at Tremont Institute.
- Trainings share materials, best practices, and teaching methods.

University of Tennessee Urban Multicultural Cohort

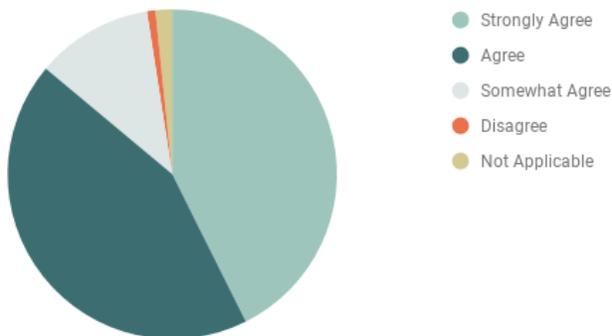
- A succession of outdoor learning touchpoints prepare education graduate students to incorporate experiential learning into the school day.
- Training has a cultural humility focus, ensuring these experiences work for a diverse student audience.
- Practicing teachers and graduate student pairs work together to explore outdoor learning potential.

Knox CAC AmeriCorps

- Emerging community leaders working with over 40 local East Tennessee organizations are trained in environmental communication, leadership skills, and experiential learning.
- Most AmeriCorps members serve the Knoxville public through positions that focus on projects that enhance community resilience through environmental education, improve public lands and infrastructure, and strengthen disaster preparedness and response.

Selection of Assessed Impacts from Teacher Escape Weekend and CAC AmeriCorps

As a result of Teacher Escape Weekend, my skills as an educator have improved



100% of CAC AmeriCorps Members feel connected to other organizations in the region that empower communities.

98% of CAC AmeriCorps Members feel equipped with the resources to facilitate education experiences

93% of educators at Teacher Escape Weekend learned something that they intend to implement into their classroom.

Community Advocacy

Pursuing our mission to “connect people with nature” as holistically as possible, Tremont Institute collaborates with a variety of community partners in Knoxville to coordinate efforts that ensure students’ regular access to nature during their academic experience. In an effort to organize the effort to provide more hands-on education to local students, Tremont Institute regularly gathers teacher and community advocates of experiential education.

Advocacy through Research & Relationship Building

Every year, Tremont Institute hosts an Education Research Symposium with the goal of bringing a diverse group of experiential education researchers and community change-makers together for a retreat in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Participants collaborate on methods to provide training, resources, assessments, and support for experiential learning for teachers, school districts, and communities. Environmental education researchers and academics from across the southeast, as well as representatives from various local institutions, are invited to the symposium, resulting in university research projects, replication of model Tremont Institute programming, and greater connections between East Tennessee experiential education leaders.

Great Smoky Mountains National Park	Blount County Soil Conservation District	Knox County Health Department
Knox County School District	Campbell County School District	Great Schools Partnership



Advocacy through Experiential Education Champions

Responding to the interest in environmental education, Tremont Institute is launching a teacher professional development series with schools in South Knoxville. The program will include:

Workshops for educators (100+ hours/teacher)

Teacher resources to implement schoolyard learning

Support and mentorship in program implementation

Teacher-peer networks across grades and curricula

Student-implemented science research in the schoolyard

An adaptive model that is tailored to specific schools

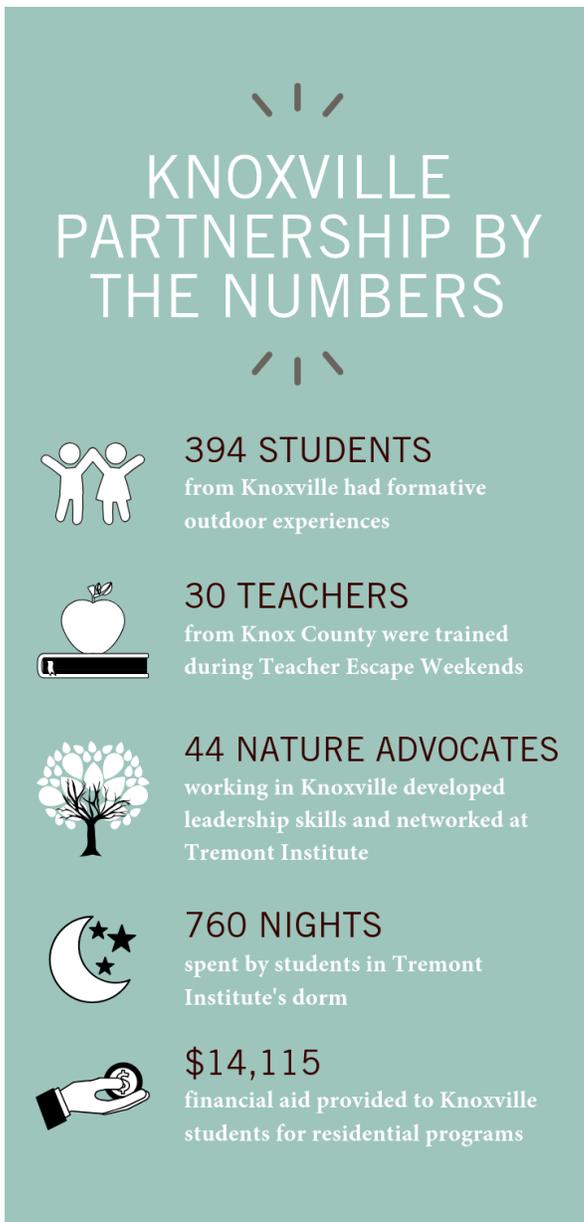
Through these multiple touchpoints, Tremont Institute aims to improve student achievement, teacher confidence using experiential education, improved teacher and student morale, student engagement in authentic learning, and a greater understanding of the value and power of citizen science. Educators trained will become advocates in their community, championing the value of experiential learning to peer educators and school administrations.

Urban Exploration

With 183 miles of greenways and trails as well as over 6,000 acres of parks, Knoxville has incredible urban green spaces just waiting to be explored. Tremont Institute is dedicated to utilizing its long history of environmental education experience to work with Knoxville students and communities to discover and increase access to natural spaces right in their backyards so that nature-based learning is more accessible to all.

Urban Exploration with Students

Tremont Institute has partnered with the Nature Conservancy, Great Schools Partnership, and the Harvey Broome chapter of the Sierra Club to manage the Nature Explorer's Sumer Camp, a nature-based summer camp for the Lonsdale school community. As part of the camp, students participate in nature-based activities, visit local green spaces, and build a sense of nature as part of their community. Moving forward, Tremont Institute will build off of existing collaborations by employing Fulton High School and UTK Multicultural Cohort students to lead the Nature Explorer's Sumer Camp.



"My favorite part [of Nature Explorer's Camp] was seeing fish and learning the cycle of a leaf. Going [from] how green it is to how its about to decompose."

-Lonsdale student-

Urban Exploration with Educators

In addition to experiential summer programs, Tremont Institute is also invested in ensuring that students and community members know what natural and cultural resources exist around them and how they can best be utilized. Though often overlooked when considering city green spaces, urban schoolyards serve as incredible living laboratories for class time exploration while acting as community hubs after school hours. Tremont Institute has partnered with several Knoxville schools for a schoolyard mapping initiative so that students, teachers, and community members can be more informed about the resources that exist just outside the classroom, opening the door for more use of schoolyards during class time.

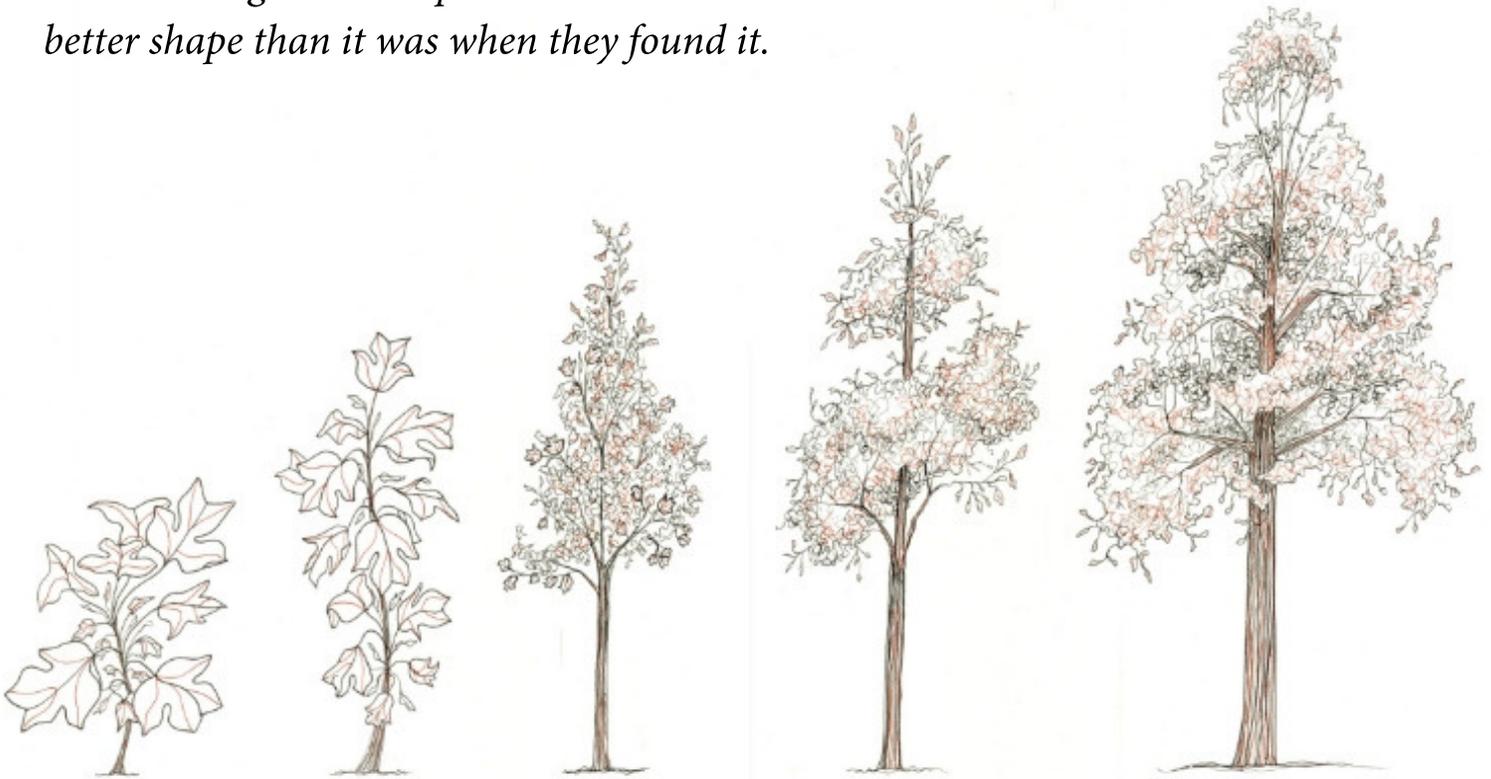


Looking towards the Future:

- Partner with Tremont Institute to help fund our work with underserved communities in Knoxville, ensuring equitable access to experiential education.
- Visit Tremont Institute's campus, to see the impact of our work firsthand or to sign up for a residential program for yourself or your school.
- Spread the word about the benefits of outdoor experiential education.
- Consider how outdoor experiential education could meet the needs of YOUR school or community.

Imagine a World...

Where each generation passes on to the next one a world that's in better shape than it was when they found it.



GROW WITH US

Thank you to all of our Knoxville partners who make this work possible!



Arconic Foundation
CAC AmeriCorps
East Tennessee Foundation
First Tennessee Foundation
Great Schools Partnership
Hike the Smokies
Knox County Schools

Pilot Flying J
Tennessee Valley Authority
The Nature Conservancy
Three Rivers Market
Sierra Club ICO
The University of Tennessee