

Teamwork is Key for Great Onyx Fire Team Mammoth Cave National Park, Kentucky National Fire Plan - Firefighting

In February and March 2005, eight young men received training in S-130 Basic Firefighting, S-190 Introduction to Fire Behavior, as well as 24 hours of field training. In April, they dug fireline, ignited, and held the line on two prescribed fires at Mammoth Cave NP. They were called in to work a project fire at Russell Cave NM. Now, they are ready and waiting for their next assignment.

“Our success story is about more than fire,” said Mammoth Cave Fire Management Officer Rich Caldwell. “Because the first team has done so well, we are expanding the program with Great Onyx Job Corps. In June, twenty more students will be trained for fire duty.”

The following are statements by two of the Great Onyx Fire Team members and another statement by Center Director Phyllis Joy Nasados. In their own words, they clearly express the significance of creation of the team, their training, and work experience.

Romale Lovelace, Great Onyx firefighter, from Columbus, Georgia: “Job Corps represented a chance for me to gain skills to get a better job. I am currently working in the computer technology field and intend to complete my A+ Certification. Being on the fire team has given me an additional employability opportunity in fire fighting. At Russell Cave, I met an actual ‘smoke jumper’, and I think that I might like to participate in that form of fire fighting. I have witnessed young adults from many different backgrounds and experiences coming together to work as a team. It is a good feeling to know that you can depend on others in dangerous situations like a fire.”

Tommy Moore, Great Onyx firefighter, from Lexington, Kentucky: “I am working on my second level in the welding trade. Welding is really as much art as it is a vocation, and many people don’t understand that. Fire fighting and welding have some basic similarities. Both demand concentration, and both can be dangerous if you lose your focus. I am originally from Chicago and my peers find it difficult to understand how I have adjusted so well to being in this remote environment. I was basically a



The Great Onyx Job Corps Fire Team posed with Mammoth Cave firefighters before heading out to the Crystal Cave prescribed fire. Photo by Vickie Carson.



Romale Lovelace of the Great Onyx Fire Team pauses while igniting the Crystal Cave prescribed fire. Photo by Vickie Carson.

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city person. Now, I feel comfortable in both environments. I would like to go to college to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering and would love to work for the National Park Service in the summers and perhaps even later as a career.”

Phyllis Joy Nasados, Director of Great Onyx Job Corps Center: “It has been less than six months ago that we implemented the first fire team training for the Great Onyx Job Corps students, and now we have a fully trained and operational fire team, who have participated in three prescribed burns. I see the tremendous impact that the fire team has had upon these students and upon their future aspirations. The most important outcomes of this endeavor has been the increased pride and esprit de corps that the fire team has created among its members.”

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