



## Curt Collier and Lucy Crespo

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:10] Welcome to Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. This is Annalies Corbin, Chief Goddess of the PAST Foundation and your host. We hear frequently that the global education system is broken. In fact, we spend billions of dollars trying to fix something that's actually not broken at all, but rather irrelevant. It's obsolete. A hundred years ago, it functioned fine. So, let's talk about how we reimagine, rethink, and redesign our educational system.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:00:45] So, today on Learning Unboxed, we are super excited, because once again, we get to go back outside. For all of our listeners, you know how much I enjoy the conversations about the amazing teaching, learning, and future of work opportunities that are involved with outdoor education. And so, today, we actually have a special treat because we are going to be talking with two wonderful folks from the Groundwork USA, a program we're going to dig into, but one that we heard about previously when we were talking with folks from Yellowstone National Park.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:01:18] And so, this is a great follow-up interview with a partner that's involved in a lot of different things and a lot of different places tied to outdoor education. And so, joining us today, we have Curt Collier. And Curt is the National Youth Program Director for Groundwork USA. And the short version of what Groundwork USA is developing programs to engage urban youth of color and conservation training programs. And they do a lot of things, actually. And so, we will get Curt to share some of that with us in a moment. So, Curt, welcome to the program.

**Curt Collier:** [00:01:56] Well, thanks for having us. Appreciate it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:01:57] Absolutely. And joining Curt today, I suspect, is one of those great triumphant stories in reading all the back pieces, joining Curt is Lucy Crespo. And what's wonderful about Lucy and Lucy's backstory, and we will be digging in with that, is that Lucy was a very early participant, it sounded like, in Groundwork USA. She was originally from Argentina, came to the US as part of DACA, found herself involved with Groundwork in 2014. And today, she's actually part of the program team. So, those are the stories we always like to hear. So, Lucy, welcome to the program.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:02:41] Thank you for having me.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:02:43] So, I want to just to start, Curt, with you. So, give our listeners who come from all over the world just the 100,000-foot view, if you will, about what exactly Groundwork USA is, sort of from that mission and vision standpoint. And then, we'll dig into the details of the way the program works.

**Curt Collier:** [00:03:06] Yeah. Groundwork was created through a unique partnership between the National Park Service and the EPA. Essentially standing on one foot, Groundwork's goal is to raise the capacity of communities to deal with their own post-industrial environmental challenges. So, rather than doing the work for communities, we work with communities to raise their capacity, build their networks, provide them with training, and then show them, through the support of best practices in 23 cities across the United States that we operate in, how to tackle these huge environmental challenges through your community network. And I, as the youth program director, my goal is to prepare that next generation that lives there in that location to do this work. These are dense urban areas that's usually diverse areas. And so, it's introducing you to conservation, conservation science, all these related fields. And these are subjects that typically are not on their radar at all.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:04:14] Yeah. And the work that PAST has done with a lot of different urban programs, it's not uncommon for us to find that students who have lived their entire lives in urban areas haven't necessarily thought about some of the environmental components in and around them. And many haven't had the opportunity, for a variety of reasons, to get outside of the traditional city or urban setting and to experience the environment, the woods, the parks, take your pick, right? And so, Lucy, how did you originally get involved? And I guess the question I'm really trying to ask you is, what drew you to this program at the time in 2014? How old were you when you engaged in this? And what got you there?

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:05:05] Yeah. So, originally, the only exposure I honestly had growing up was going camping with my family. The only reason I even went to a national park with the first time was because I joined Groundwork. I actually found it by accident. I was volunteering at a community event that we always have, the Tour de Elizabeth, and I actually went to go buy plants, bumped into some of our directors for Groundwork Elizabeth. They offered me to get interviewed to volunteer.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:05:39] So, that was my hook. I actually got hired the first day I went to the interview. And two months later, I was offered the unique opportunity to go to Yellowstone National Park with Curt. So, there, we met Curt and I was amazed. Honestly, just being in Yellowstone, doing the conservation work that we did, meeting the people that I did, and I realized that there were people like me with similar interests as me. Although conservation wasn't my first option, I, at the time, wanted to study veterinary medicine.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:06:18] Later, I realized that I liked environmental science a lot more. And working with the people that we have in Yellowstone and many other national parks throughout the years, I ended up returning to Yellowstone not only for another time, I think, Curt, in other three or four times. I couldn't get enough, honestly. And then, in 2016, I joined an internship which taught me more about research and all the opportunities that I can teach my youth coming back home.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:06:53] I was appointed the Youth Leader, which gave me even more opportunities to bring youth my age and even younger to national parks to kind of experience the same thing and open their eyes to the opportunities that lie ahead, opportunities that in urban communities we never talk about, aren't exposed to, and it doesn't even seem like it is an option for us until it was exposed to Groundwork Elizabeth and Groundwork USA.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:07:23] And I hear that very thing frequently from students who've gone through some of our own environmental outdoor education programs. Oh, I never even thought this was possible. And we collectively have lots and lots of conversations about the fact that you can't be what you can't see. And I add to that, I say, you also can't do what you don't know, right? Because you have to be exposed to the potential possibilities. And to feel really comfortable in the potential that, hey, I could, in fact, do this thing, I need to be surrounded by mentors, leaders, trainers who look and feel or have similar experiences with me.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:08:05] And so, it's not that I think that anybody debates those things, I think folks get them, but I would argue that, oftentimes, even if we can understand and admit those things, we don't necessarily always, the folks doing programs, understand how to get there, right? And that's one of the things, Curt, that I really love about this program, is the program itself has made a very concerted effort to bring together students with similar backgrounds and experiences.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:08:35] So, one of the ones that I know that Lucy participated in was an all-Latina group. What an amazing opportunity. But that's not the only one, right? So, you've been very deliberate, Curt, in the way you've constructed or architected these programs. So, talk to us a little bit about sort of the philosophy that you utilize to pull some of these programs together. Give us a couple of examples, because, quite frankly, they're wonderful.

**Curt Collier:** [00:08:59] Well, we have spent many, many, many years thinking about our logic model for how we engage our youth. And I think anyone who's involved in this should not be willy-nilly. I think you really should plan, be planful about how you engage youth. Because of that internship, it is more likely to turn youth off the environment work than anything else. You could actually do damage to the future conservation of that young person by setting up the wrong work environments.

**Curt Collier:** [00:09:27] Almost all of our youth, our urban, they're in places where they're told not to sit on the soil that is contaminated, which it is, not to swim in the river, you'll get a third eye, all these things about nature, then the messages that they consistently get. You have to kind of first understand that our ideas, and our understanding, and appreciation for nature is formulated fairly early. It was early at '85, we start making a big formation in our mind about what nature is and how to interact with it.

**Curt Collier:** [00:10:02] So, part of that is to understand that we need to kind of go back and reconnect youth with nature in ways perhaps that they never even had before or even have an appreciation for. And so, a part of that is to start young. And we have many in school and after-school programs that Groundwork does to kind of just expose youth, perhaps their first exposure to it. We have multiple points of entry. Lucy mentioned that she started in a big bike rally that they have in Elizabeth New Jersey, or we made the urban air culture, or maybe a summer job. And then, once they're in this, to follow the same youth for as many years we possibly can. I've known Lucy, what, eight years? I was trying to think those years.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:10:46] Eight years.

**Curt Collier:** [00:10:47] Yeah, quite a long time. And she represents just the intelligence of the urban youth of thinking about how can you need work. So, we think of them not as something we're just educating, but as resources for understanding how the work that we're doing needs to happen. And so, it's multiple years of engagement, multiple points of entry. We also need to close that STEM gap because many of our youth are coming from schools are underfunded in science programs.

**Curt Collier:** [00:11:19] And therefore, when they get to college or finally get there, they take biochemistry, they take calculus, and it just basically eats their lunch. Many of these youth are on financial aid, and therefore their fear is that a boy, if I lose my GPA, I'm going to lose my federal funding and they'll switch majors, which we see nationwide is kind of a hampering of youth kind of dropping out of the program. But we also believe firmly in a body of research called identity theory, or at least I do, and that it has to say that our identities form fairly early and that people will stick with them for as long as we can.

**Curt Collier:** [00:11:58] And one of those identities we wanted you to think about is I am a conservationist. This is the work I do. I work with scientists. We call them colleagues. We don't call them youth. We pair them

with scientists early on in conservation works and conservation professionals. So, Lucy's talking about not only her work at Elizabeth, but we take the youth to Yellowstone and work alongside conservationists there. And you immerse youth in this whole identity that has to do with the, I am a conservationist.

**Curt Collier:** [00:12:26] And the more youth can get that early on, the more they'll even survive the difficult math and science, as long as you're helping to reinforce that. So, we think pretty deeply about all these things that have to happen, and all the different points of entry, and all the interest levels, and all the multiple years of engagement. We fund our youth as much as we can through all of their training because we don't want them to think of the conservation as something you just volunteer for. And there are a lot of groups out there that are just branding the youth as volunteers and you go with the message that that's something that people do who have the money, can't afford to do that on the side, it's not a job. This is a job. It's a career. It starts early and we could support them for many years.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:13:10] I love the fact that there is a deliberate process, and quite frankly, even an ethos sort of wrapped around the entire program to have the youth, these potential conservationists to come back time and time again, which would explain to me when I got all the documentation and I'm looking through all the amazing things that Lucy has done, and I'm like, oh, my gosh, man, I want to be Lucy, because, wow, some really cool things, that explains it.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:13:44] How you pack in so much stuff, so many different experiences in such a short period of time, quite frankly. It may seem like a long time to you, but the reality is that the list of things that you've gotten to experience, it's phenomenal. And so, I want to talk a little bit, Lucy, about some of those experiences, because when I look through the list of the different places that you've traveled to go and work. So, it wasn't just Yellowstone. It wasn't even just in your local community, but Grand Teton, and all kinds of parks, and all kinds of places.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:14:18] So, share with our listeners a little bit of not just so much your favorite places, but some of the experiences that you've had along the way through this program that you feel like made a huge difference or an impact on your life. I mean, obviously, you've chosen to stick with this because you're now a professional in this space. So, we get that part of it. But share with us a little bit about some of the program experiences that you think were life-changing, or altering, or important to you.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:14:49] Sure. That's a little bit difficult just because of so much we've been through in the last couple of years, not only thanks to Groundwork Elizabeth and Groundwork USA, but thanks to Curt as a mentor. I think one of the biggest experiences was going on a three-month internship. That might have been 2016, where Curt sent me an application for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. And I think that might have been the beginning of the realization that I'd like to stick with Groundwork as long as I could.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:15:21] And during those three months, we spent in Tennessee, and North Carolina, and Virginia working in most of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, doing research. Apart from trail maintenance, I think research, that's when I realized how much I like it. We did snail research, other amphibian research, phenology research. I think we did a little bit of air quality. And with all those different experiences that I had, it's something that I knew I wanted to bring back to my community.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:16:01] It's not that we focus on one certain task, or technique, or practice, but they honestly serve two different interests that we had because of a lot of the certifications that I gained during that time. Crosscut and saw, trail maintenance, CPR, and wilderness first aid that created a nicer resume for when I returned for many jobs. And out of the opportunities that I received, I actually accepted working for Groundwork

Elizabeth as a youth leader. And because of this, I was able to create a bigger impact in my community, not only to my community, but to my youth.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:16:48] I was able to mold our program into something similar to what I experienced with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. I was able to teach my youth about trail maintenance, if that's what they'd like to do one day, invasive species removal and maintenance. We were able to do more research projects. Things that I learned at the Great Smoky Mountains is programs that I brought back to my youth back home, even increasing our demographics in STEM careers.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:17:22] In the beginning, not only in Elizabeth, but in all New Jersey, there was a decrease or there's always been a decrease in women in STEM careers. So, I made it my personal mission throughout the years to increase women in STEM careers and tend to their interest and their needs as Groundwork. So, I felt like we were filling that achievement gap in Elizabeth at least, and creating more of these opportunities for women, and not only women, but people of color for our youth.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:18:03] We were able to give them opportunities with the Fish and Wildlife Service, bringing them to the Great Swamp Wildlife Refuge and possible careers there. But we also took them to Paterson Great Falls, and taught them opportunities there of possible careers with Curt in historic preservation. The Latinx projects taking women from Elizabeth, New Jersey to Grand Teton's national park, which was our first time there, teaching them about historic preservation and making history.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:18:40] Correct me if I'm wrong, Curt, but we were the first all women and all Latinas to conduct historic preservation work there. So, that in itself was unique to me and it was kind of historic. And even our town because it's something that you don't hear of, especially in our culture, women, and especially Latinas all doing construction was pretty unique. We typically don't see that in our culture. It's something that we aren't taught growing up.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:19:15] I fought for years for my family to teach me about construction and what I mostly got was, pass me the tools. So, it was pretty significant for us to learn those skills, being there with Curt, and Joe, and then bringing it back home to Paterson Great Falls. It's skills that many of us wish we've had growing up. And it's not too late. We're learning them now and that's thanks to our mentors.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:19:46] But now, you have gone from mentee to mentor yourself. And so, that's that beautiful cyclical process that's happened here. So, Curt, I want to talk just a little bit about some of the things that Lucy made reference to and some of the different places that the program runs. So, one of the ones that we haven't really touched on, which I'm really intrigued by, is restoration project on civil rights era sites in Tuskegee, Alabama, right? And so, talk with us a little bit, Curt, about how you pulled that program together. What does it look like in terms of not just the work they're going to do there, but what you hope that the youth who participate gain from that experience? And why there? And why now?

**Curt Collier:** [00:20:37] I mean, the majority of the youth, the work that the youth that is within their neighborhoods. You're trying to bring not only the youth along with their families, their friends, their networks. If you're teleporting youth to some other environment, and then bringing them home without any support, or follow-up, or engagement in any way, how powerful can the experience be? And then, we have a lot of people just like Lucy was saying that's not something her family normally would have said was work that they thought was appropriate for her in some ways.

**Curt Collier:** [00:21:11] And Lucy and I have talked about this many times. So, it is essential. Of course, you do start with those work experiences within the neighborhood as much as you can, especially big, powerful, oh,

my God, I can't believe we did that, types of projects that Lucy is talking about. But if you only work in the urban environment, you kind of lose that connection to something bigger, that we're a part of a conservation movement in the United States of people of many different backgrounds, and traditions, and people who look radically different from us and people who look very much like us, that we're all engaged in this one thing.

**Curt Collier:** [00:21:50] And so, we do a balance between local and distance learning as much as we can. That also allows the youth perhaps to see what they don't see, like what you mentioned earlier, that if you're raised in an environment that—I used to run a program where youth would use a little tracking device and they'd walk around their neighborhood, we were training them to look at their neighborhood and to identify the types of things that need to get fixed or made better so that the city could respond to it with our help, this kind of urban mapping.

**Curt Collier:** [00:22:22] And I remember during the training for the program, and the youth looking at the maps that we created, which were big pictures of the city of Yonkers, New York, and saying, okay, now, here and look at this big picture, what do you see that you want to have fixed or improve? And youths struggled. Well, that sounds pretty good. Yeah, my uncle lives on the street, I never forget one kid saying that. None of us see what we don't see, right?

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:22:47] Right.

**Curt Collier:** [00:22:47] We're kind of endorsed in that. So, connecting you to something bigger, then also giving them that opportunity to see perhaps things that they didn't realize that they should be within their purview to have. I'll never forget, we were at Yellowstone National Park and they're climbing some really big dam as part of recreational activities after a day of work, believe it or not, and at the last minute, I always do this funny thing where I run to the top of the mountain and see the youth can, first of all, run past me.

**Curt Collier:** [00:23:15] And I'm standing at the top of the mountain and we're all out of there already, 8,000 something feet, and this youth comes up, he's huffing and puffing, he goes, oh, my God, this is so beautiful. Everybody should see this. Everybody should have a right to see this wherever they are. And that kind of insight that that's indeed that look at this beautiful setting, and these trails, and these mountains, and things like that, that even in the urban environment, everybody should have a right to something like that.

**Curt Collier:** [00:23:45] And so, part of what we try to do is partner with the National Park Service is a big partner, US Fish and Wildlife, many of the other agencies over the years, like Forest Service, USDA, whatever it is, to connect them and take them to projects outside or with partners so that they could see themselves as part of this ecosystem of partners, and activities, and conservations, and professionals, and feel like they're connected to this bigger thing.

**Curt Collier:** [00:24:16] Part of that identity we talked about early on, that they're moving into something that's expansive and bigger than just their neighborhood, and has kind of a lot of the depth and fun too. Lucy is a prime example. I just think she's brilliant in so many respects. But Lucy works with this project with the National Park Service called Mountains to Main Street with Megan Kohli, one of the rangers we worked with out at Grand Teton. And part of that was to not just sell the outdoors to people, but to think about what are the needs and passions of our local community, and then use the parks assets to meet those needs, right?

**Curt Collier:** [00:25:01] So, job training experiences, resume building experiences, STEM enrichment, all of those things are what the youth are also asking for. And public lands have the assets to do those things. We don't need to sell them on beautiful vistas, or looking at gorgeous trees, or things like that. The first thing is just

to say, where are you? What do you need? And how can we connect you to them? Sometimes, they don't have any voice to that, so these things are just to get them out there to do that.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:25:32] Yeah. And that makes total sense. And so, Lucy, let's talk a little bit about that engagement piece, right? Because now, you're in a completely different role. As we indicated, you are now the mentor. You're helping to lead this effort. So, how do you convince urban youth to be part of something like this? Because the reality is it's a big stretch outside of traditional comfort zone of many of the students who are participating in your program.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:26:04] And to your point, I had never even contemplated such a thing, or my family, or my culture would necessarily have identified if that's an appropriate or viable thing for me to do. Not hampering you, but it doesn't even occur as an opportunity. So, how do you go out in the streets of any urban center and convince, quite frankly—I mean, how do you convince the students to give this thing a try? Because I would imagine it's pretty difficult for you to find a tangible way to help them understand what they're really getting in for.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:26:42] Yeah, that's always been the difficult part from the start. And lately, we've had an increase in applications, I think, not only because of their interest in our events. I think that might have been the big hook. I have dozens of community events, river cleanups, and that's probably when we find the majority of our green team. They have an interest in them already. They have the interest to do good. They have the interest to help the environment. I think it might be with the newer generations, I've been getting more applicants and more interest.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:27:27] But honestly, talking to the community. Some of our best youth, we found by accident. I was found by accident, just attending our events, speaking to them about their interests, if they've ever thought of going to a national park. The majority of the time, they've been to a national park and never realized it was a national park just because it was a place that their family might have taken them to locally, but they never really understood what the logo meant until we introduced it to them.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:27:58] So, I think community events has been the biggest one. And then, seeing that someone that they know has attended and participated in our green team summer, sometimes, we get friends of a green team who have seen something that they liked from their friends in social media, and it's something that they realize, oh, maybe that's something that I'd like to give a try.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:28] So, it's easier with a buddy, right? Yeah.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:28:30] Yeah.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:28:30] I know someone who did that and it wasn't awful, so I think I might go try that, right? Yeah.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:28:35] Exactly. And it's that only convincing our urban youth, it's also convincing their parents. That has always been a big thing, even from when I was a green team. So, I completely understand them hesitating to go to Yellowstone National Park across the country. It's something that you have to—not only you, but your parents have to feel safe of bringing you to these national parks. A lot of the stereotypes in our community is, oh, there's the woods there, oh, don't go in there, it's dangerous, oh, there's a trail there, don't go in there, it's dangerous.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:29:13] So, even during the years, convincing the community that, no, this trail isn't dangerous, and then I think a lot of the cleaning up we do and the interpretive signage help a lot to make it more inviting for the community. We have the Elizabeth river trail here, which for years, since I was in high school, was perceived as to be the danger trail. Don't walk through there, it's dangerous along the river. To be honest, I've never seen anything dangerous about it the last 20 years, but that's just the mentality that we have here, sadly.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:29:49] And I think over the years with our work and not only us, but the message that our green team spread to the community themselves, on their own time, not even with us, has helped a significant amount in having events, just inviting not only the youth but the community as a whole to these public lands. And eventually, we went from having maybe two to three applications to now having over 40 to 50 applications over the last seven to eight years. So, something's working.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:21] Yeah, something's working. Absolutely.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:30:26] Something's working.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:30:27] Absolutely. So, Curt, as we work on wrapping up here, I always like to end the program recognizing that there are amazing partners and organizations spread around the world that are maybe doing some similar things, but not exactly, and there are are amazing teachers out there as well who recognize that finding ways to get more and more of our students outside earlier rather than later, and ongoing in a repeated sort of fashion, but sometimes, it's really difficult.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:31:03] And so, one of the things that always happens with this program is I hear from folks, teachers in particular, who say, hey, I heard Curt talking about this thing, but I don't have Groundworks in my community, but I'd like to maybe think about doing some similar pieces, but I don't even know how to start doing or creating a program, even for my own students in my own classroom, in my own school, to go out into the community. So, what would you recommend to folks who are listening to this saying, wow, look at what this program did for Lucy? And how can I make sure that all the Lucys in my classroom end up with the same opportunities and the same passion for what they're doing? How do you help kids get there, Curt?

**Curt Collier:** [00:31:51] Years ago, I was on another radio program in Austin, Texas about development of youth, and somebody called in, one of the listeners called in, and says, is television bad for youth? This was back in the '80s, as you could tell. And I was working with my colleagues, and she says, if the television is the only place where you get all your information about the world, then it's bad, because it's their voice and their message that overwhelm you.

**Curt Collier:** [00:32:22] But the television is only one of the places that youth get their message, and same with their school teachers, their parents, the community leaders, maybe they belong to some religion, some religious leaders, if all of those have a different message, then those can really make a decision based on lots of information. I think you have to, when you're designing your program for youth, think about that. What are all the messages my youth are getting? And where are they getting it from?

**Curt Collier:** [00:32:55] So, I did make a concerted effort to reach out to the schools and get the teachers involved. We do in-service trainings. Lucy's brought out school teacher groups to train the teachers in these programs. We do bring in their other partners. Anything can be used to have a conversation about the environment, or public health, or those kinds of stuff. And you can reach out to them and just start to paint this broader picture of the message that the youth get consistently again and again, is this what matters?

**Curt Collier:** [00:33:27] And we can have many different versions of it. Not every youth was going to want to do what Lucy did and live in a tent for six weeks, biking up and down the Appalachian Trail, and doing some very, very hard work. That's not for every youth. But what it did is these consistent messages, perhaps, maybe that Lucy heard over the years, not from her family, but from Groundwork and from all these other groups that she's worked in, led her to complete her degree in environmental science, right, Lucy?

**Curt Collier:** [00:33:59] Graduated from that and get hired by another Groundwork organization. But trust me, a lot of people had snapped her up in men to do the kind of work she's doing. And so, you do purposely need to plan that. And there are a lot of good partners out there. You do want to look for groups that are anchored in the community. You don't want people just teleporting into any community there for a little while, and then leaving the youth alone. Because what happens over time is the youth get the idea that, oh, boy, here they are, song and dance, there's no follow-up.

**Curt Collier:** [00:34:32] Youth want to feel supported through that whole journey like they're trying on this identity of conservation scientists, and they want to be supported through that, and feel connected to their friends that she talked about, a sense of community that they belong to. And those things, as identity theory shows, carries them through the difficult work that they need to do this. I mean, Lucy trudging up and down the mountain, carrying a pick mattock and doing all this work, probably her motivation is that somehow this was part of something bigger that she wanted to be a part of herself.

**Curt Collier:** [00:35:04] But I think that that's the message we connect as many times as possible. And you want the entire community reiterating that statement. And you want to stop the negative voices. And probably, the youth know, say, oh, boy, there goes Ranger Rick again, trying to get me to do this. And we were up at Rocky Mountain National Park, we had a series of skits we have to use for going about their work, and that was one of the youth got on, that he went home very excited and started talk to his mom. And she really wasn't interested. She had things to do. Talked to dad, he wasn't really interested, things to do.

**Curt Collier:** [00:35:43] And talk to friends, they were all laughing, and when did you become Ranger Rick, he said. And then, he met a fellow green teamer, someone from the Groundwork program, and then they hit it off and they started talking very excitedly. And I think in that one moment, those youth encapsulated what we have to do, is to create a continuing increase in voices out there saying this is the work you should do. And their jobs in here, there's a career in this, there is community connectedness, and there's a paycheck in this. And I think that's what we need to do.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:36:14] Yeah, I love that. It's all about helping students find their way and to find something they can be passionate about. I can change the world. I can be part of my community. I can have a job. I can have a career. All those things. But also, to be passionate stewards along the way, whether, like Lucy, they go to school, they get their degree in environmental science, and they continue to do this work or they get those degrees and they continue to support that work by doing something else around the fringes. But they're still part of a community that understands the importance and the need. So, that's half the battle. I want to thank you both very much for taking time today to share the story of Groundwork USA, as well as all the local groups doing that work. Thank you very, very much for sharing with us.

**Curt Collier:** [00:37:06] And thank you for having me.

**Lucy Crespo:** [00:37:06] Thank you for having us.

**Annalies Corbin:** [00:37:12] Thank you for joining us for Learning Unboxed, a conversation about teaching, learning, and the future of work. I want to thank my guests and encourage you all to be part of the

conversation. Meet me on social media @AnnaliesCorbin and join me next time as we stand up, step back, and lean in to reimagine education.