Dennis Chestnut

Biography

Dennis Chestnut is a native Washingtonian, and is a lifetime resident of the Hillbrook neighborhood of Ward 7. Dennis is a master carpenter and vocational educator by profession, but his dedication to youth development, community improvement and civic duty has led to his involvement with many civic and conservation projects, and enriching experiences. He is also a lover of the outdoors, has a passion for conservation and the environment, and has advised many community, business and government leaders on civic ecology and civic engagement issues.

Growing up in the far-northeast section of Washington, DC, Dennis became connected to the many green spaces, parks, streams, and the Anacostia River, where he learned to swim as a child. Dennis has served as the carpentry internship instructor at the Academy of Construction and Design at IDEA Public Charter High School since 2017, and is the retired founding executive director of Groundwork Anacostia River DC. Among the many programs and projects developed by Groundwork, two stand out, the Green Team youth leadership development program, and the Bandalong litter traps. Managing these four litter traps resulted in the removal of tons of trash and debris from the Anacostia River, becoming one of Groundwork’s signature programs. Dennis is a board member with the East of the River Youth Steel Band, chairs the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and the Capital Recreation Youth Sports Program. Dennis is a Senior Fellow of the Chesapeake Region Environmental
Leadership Program, an appointee to Mayor Muriel Bowser’s Leadership Council for a Cleaner Anacostia River and the Urban Forestry Advisory Council. Dennis is a member of the United for a Healthy Anacostia River Coalition, the National Capitol Region Anacostia Watershed Stewards Academy, and the Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee. Dennis has received numerous awards including the Greater Washington Interfaith Partnership Vision Award, the Lankford/Giles/Vaughn Minority Architect Award for Community Activism, the DC Appleseed Sustainable Living and Leading Award, and most recently the 2019 River Network River Hero. Dennis has also appeared in numerous publications, books and video documentaries that highlight his work on restoring the health of the Anacostia River, improving the East of the River communities, and developing high quality youth programs.

Ward 7 and areas east of the Anacostia River have been described as the “Greenest” Ward and section of Washington, D.C. outside of the National Mall, but also is where some of the most environmentally challenging conditions in the city has existed. This is the reason why Dennis has committed himself to restoring the health of the Anacostia River, improving the natural resources located in this community and throughout Washington, D.C., and connecting the residents, schools, businesses, civic and community organizations to the many outdoor resources and natural environment through tangible on-the-ground projects that Change Places and Change Lives.