

# Transforming Communities Through Service: A Collection of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps State and Volunteer Generation Fund Programs in the United States



*A report by  
America's Service Commissions and Innovations in Civic Participation  
April 2014*



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**About Innovations in Civic Participation**

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a non-profit organization supporting the development of innovative high-quality youth civic engagement policies and programs both in the US and around the world. ICP is a leader in the global movement to promote sustainable development and social change through youth civic engagement. We embrace a positive view of young people that recognizes their potential to create beneficial and lasting social change in their communities through active participation in service opportunities.

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**About America's Service Commissions**

America's Service Commissions is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing and promoting the 53 governor-appointed state service commissions across the United States and territories with the mission to advance national service, volunteerism, and the network of state service commissions. State service commissions are governor-appointed public agencies or nonprofit organizations made up of more than 1,110 commissioners - private citizens leading the nation's service movement and operating the granting of federal national service funds at the state and local level.

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## Table of Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Program Directory by State	8
Programs by Focus Area	
Crisis Intervention	9
Economic Opportunity	14
Education	21
Environmental Stewardship	48
Healthy Futures	55
Volunteer Generation Fund	64
Other Impact Areas	73

### The AmeriCorps Pledge

I will get things done for America –  
to make our people safer,  
smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together  
to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy,  
I will take action.

Faced with conflict,  
I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity,  
I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment  
with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member,  
and I will get things done

*"Citizen service is the very American idea that we meet our challenges not as isolated individuals but as members of a true community, with all of us working together. Our mission is nothing less than to spark a renewed sense of obligation, a new sense of duty, a new season of service..."*

– President Bill Clinton

*"Every problem that the country faces is being solved in some community by some group or some individual. The question is how to get connected so that the whole nation can solve problems."*

– President George H. W. Bush

*"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."*

– President Barack Obama

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



Established in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its core programs -- Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, Volunteer Generation Fund, and the Social Innovation Fund -- and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve.

*This publication was created independently of the Corporation for National and Community Service.*

## Foreword

Dear Friends of National Service,

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) and America's Service Commissions (ASC) are proud to share the 2014 edition of "Transforming Communities Through Service: A Collection of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps State and Volunteer Generation Fund Programs in the United States".

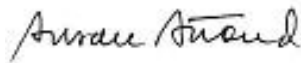
The 2014 edition commemorates the 20th Anniversary of AmeriCorps and state service commissions. In 1993, Congress enacted the National and Community Service Act, creating AmeriCorps and the Corporation for National and Community Service. President Clinton signed the legislation in September 1993, and the first class of AmeriCorps members began serving in 1994. State service commissions were established between 1993-1994.

The 2014 publication highlights the impact of AmeriCorps on a number of pressing community challenges from public safety to education. Unlike previous versions of this report that were published in 2005 and 2010, the 2014 publication includes programs funded by the Volunteer Generation Fund, a new program authorized by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act to support voluntary organizations and state service commissions in boosting the impact of volunteers in addressing critical community needs.

This publication highlights 28 innovative AmeriCorps State and four innovative Volunteer Generation Fund programs from 21 states. State service commissions from California to Wyoming shared the details of the innovative programs that are making a difference in the lives of Americans. We hope you will use the information about these programs to educate others about AmeriCorps members' and volunteers' role in transforming communities nationwide through service.

By sharing information about innovative programming, we hope to support the role of states as laboratories for service and to foster new models for addressing a variety of pressing social issues. Whether a program recruits mentors, preserves our environment, helps children read, empowers persons with disabilities to serve, or provides direct assistance to at-risk, low-income seniors, AmeriCorps is "getting things done" for America.

ICP and ASC would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Advisory Committee, as well as to the ICP and ASC staff who created the publication. We welcome you to read it, use it, share it, and let these innovative program examples inspire you and your work.



Susan Stroud  
Executive Director  
Innovations in Civic Participation



Tom Branen  
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## Introduction

The following pages showcase 32 remarkable AmeriCorps State and Volunteer Generation Fund programs from 21 states. The programs are grouped by one main issue area in which they impact, but many of the programs have outreach and impacts across multiple issue areas. The publication is organized by primary impact issue area, as outlined in the table of contents on page 4. A directory listing by state is provided on page 8.

Each profile provides a brief description, key innovative elements, contact information and examples of the program's success stories. The program overview provides a brief snapshot into the activities of the innovative programs profiled. We invite you to visit the programs' websites and/or contact them to learn more.

In addition to the program focus area(s), this publication provides special designations in the areas of rural impact, disaster services, veteran and military families, and Governor and Mayor Initiative.

- Rural Impact: These programs play a unique role in strengthening rural communities.
- Disaster Services: These programs play a critical role responding in times of disaster.
- Veterans & Military Families: These programs engage veterans or military families in service as a solution to community challenges.
- Governor and Mayor Initiative: These programs are a partnership between the state's governor and a local mayor who are using national service to address a pressing community challenge.

Each application was reviewed by at least three readers from the Advisory Committee. Traditionally, innovative is defined as something that has never been done or experienced before. This project utilized a more open and inclusive definition. A program could be innovative in that it is immensely successful, has developed new service delivery strategies, creative in a use of funding, or has demonstrated innovation in forming different partnerships. Each program includes at least two of the following elements:

- Lasting impact on Members, community, or state
- Meeting its outcomes/delivering meaningful service
- Exceptional and/or unique partnerships
- A real spirit of service
- Potential for replication in other states
- A strong record of compliance
- Cross-program connections (ex., AmeriCorps working with Senior Corps, AmeriCorps working with non-national service volunteer programs, etc.)
- Outstanding volunteer and/or resource generation
- An active alumni group
- Creating systemic change in their area of work

The variety and impact of the programs included in this publication is awe-inspiring. National and community service programs are providing opportunities for citizens to play an active role in addressing community needs. We hope everyone who reads these profiles will be inspired by the tales of ordinary citizens transforming their communities through service.



**America's  
Service  
Commissions**  
American Association  
of State Service Commissions



State	Program Name	Page
California	California Volunteers Service Enterprise Initiative *	67
Colorado	Mile High Youth Corps *	53
District of Columbia	Higher Achievement	32
Georgia	Clayton State University AmeriCorps Program	26
Illinois	Peace Corps Fellows Program in Community Development *	17
	PCC AmeriCorps-PCC Community Wellness Center	62
Iowa	Graceland University AmeriCorps Youth Launch *	30
Maine	Island Fellows AmeriCorps Program *	34
	United Way of Tri-Valley Area Volunteer Center *	71
Massachusetts	AmeriCorps Cape Cod * +	49
	Massachusetts Promise Fellowship *	38
Maryland	Business Volunteers Maryland	65
	Volunteer Maryland *	74
Michigan	AmeriCorps Urban Safety Project -	76
	Detroit Youth Energy	51
Minnesota	Community Technology Empowerment Project	15
	Minnesota Alliance with Youth *	40
	Minnesota Reading Corps *	44
Nebraska	College Possible Omaha AmeriCorps	28
	Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) *	19
Nevada	Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation AmeriCorps Program *+	60
Ohio	AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches *	24
South Carolina	WINGS for Kids *	46
Tennessee	Making Veterans Priority * ^	78
	Community Cares *+ ^	56
Texas	ACE: A Community for Education	22
	Food on the Move	58
Utah	Read. Graduate. Succeed. * ~	42
Washington	Prepare/Respond/Serve + ^	69
Wisconsin	Partners for After School Success *	36
	Wisconsin Association for Homelessness and Runaway Services *	10
Wyoming	Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault *	12

Special Designation Key:    \*Rural            +Disaster            ^Veterans            -Gov/Mayor Initiative



## Crisis Intervention



Utilizing community outreach, counseling, and promoting available services, AmeriCorps members are using cooperative and strategically organized programs to advocate for and serve individuals and families that are in or have gone through a crisis. Among the various services these programs are offering, crisis intervention is a key aspect to service provided by the Wisconsin Association for Homelessness and Runaway Services (pictured above).

## Wisconsin Association for Homelessness and Runaway Services



The Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services, formed in 1979, is a coalition of community based, voluntary, nonprofit agencies created to address the problem of runaway children that affects almost 26,000 Wisconsin families. The Association's member agency services include street outreach to youth in crisis and education to community partners on the needs of runaway youth. The services WAHRS offers include preventive and crisis counseling, temporary shelter and referrals for additional services. Family counseling is also available to facilitate reconciliation with parents whenever possible. These services are available on a "walk-in" basis and through a 24 hour hotline. WAHRS offers young people an opportunity to sort out problems and begin building positive relationships with parents, friends, schools and community.

WAHRS currently has 25 AmeriCorps members who address these problems by providing an array of support services for runaway and homeless youth as well as the community. These services include street outreach, community education, community outreach, short term crisis intervention programs, transitional living programs, and shelters for homeless pregnant and parenting teens.

### *Program Innovations*

WAHRS AmeriCorps sites are located in both rural and urban areas, and are the only agencies in their communities that provide services to run away and homeless youth. Members strengthen program services by aiding in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers who provide peer counseling, street and community outreach, hotline coverage and a wide array of other support services. In the 2012-2013 program year, WAHRS AmeriCorps members recruited, trained, or managed 1,122 volunteers who provided 50,313 hours of service to the program.

In the 2012-2013 program year:

- Members had 35,753 contacts with youth, providing clothing, food, referrals, and transportation
- Over 3,409 youth accessed additional services
- 97% either returned home or to an alternative placement
- Only 3 percent of youth ran away again

**Issue Areas:** Homeless and Runaway Services

**Designations:** Rural Impact

### **Innovative Elements**

- Equal funding to rural and urban programs
- Street outreach to youth
- Extensive member training to better provide service

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Many youth are distrustful of traditional service, making the street outreach component of the WAHRS AmeriCorps program provides a critical resource for ensuring youth's safety and well-being. Trained AmeriCorps members provide direct access to needed resources through contact with youth on the street and other places teens in crisis congregate. The programs have demonstrated success with 95% of the youth accepting services either returning home (with additional support services) or to an alternative safe living arrangement.

The use of long-term volunteers in a runaway program is unique. Some volunteers participate in a 40-hour training program, after which they work in the runaway program providing hotline coverage and co-counseling youth and families. These volunteers commit to weekly shifts which aid shelters in the provision of 24-hour coverage. Volunteers are also trained and licensed to be host homes, providing shelter to runaway and homeless youth for up to 21 days. In an external evaluation (Organizational Skills Assoc.-2012), a staggering 100% of members responded favorably to their satisfaction with their AmeriCorps experience. Members have repeatedly stated the best part of the program was the "changes [they] make in a youth's life." Further evidence of members' positive service experience, 97% of members view their work with youth very favorably.

### *Secrets to Success*

WAHRS is a program that is unique on many levels. WAHRS programs were developed using community boards consisting of police, schools, youth, parents, civic leaders, and faith-based organizations to ensure community wide support. Lutheran Social Services, Family Services, and the Boys and Girls Club are among many umbrella agencies housing the programs. Further, WAHRS is one of only two statewide programs providing runaway services in the nation. Members developed a funding strategy which ensures that services will be delivered and maintained on a statewide basis rather than having the large urban area of the state monopolizes the funding. This strategy has enabled long-term statewide coverage for runaway services even when federal funding was significantly reduced.



## Wyoming Coalition against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

Wyoming Advocate Corps (WyAC) members serve to empower adult and child survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault crimes in non-profit community advocacy agencies throughout Wyoming. Well-trained member advocates address safety issues and other needs of victims, promote understanding of critical issues and services available in their communities, and build the capacity of local domestic violence/sexual assault (DVSA) programs to respond more effectively to the needs of victims through recruiting, training, and management of community volunteers and financial literacy.

An AmeriCorps member's primary role is to provide information, referrals, support, safety planning, safe shelter, transportation, childcare, landlord or creditor intervention, and assistance in relocation. They assist victims as they work with law enforcement, civil or criminal legal systems, medical services, and social service systems. Members work to secure job training, other education opportunities, emergency financial help, and housing. They also work with children to address the effects of the violence perpetrated against them and to broaden their support systems.

WyAC members are responsible to not only have the background knowledge of the various issues, but also to know how to best assist survivors of all ages and backgrounds with their personal needs. Members are also trained in financial literacy to specifically provide education to those most vulnerable.

### *Program Innovations*

#### Lasting impact on members and community

The WyAC AmeriCorps members serving as advocates have impacted the lives of thousands of Wyoming people living in fear and violence. They have been able to aid in the community response to victims and change societal attitudes about interpersonal violence and related issues. In addition to working one-on-one, some members facilitate peer education support groups, providing opportunities for those in the groups to learn from and support each other. Members also set the standard for respectful, non-violent relationships by providing quality prevention education and awareness in both schools and community groups to increase knowledge about the various issues and services available.

#### Delivering meaningful service

WyAC members inspire community volunteers to give their time and resources to victims of violence. Members work diligently to make volunteer involvement possible which in turn

**Issue Areas:** Domestic Violence; Sexual Assault

**Designations:** Rural Impact

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Service is delivered in many ways
- Wide network of programs across the state
- Lasting impact on individuals and communities

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increases the capacity of the local programs to meet the overwhelming community need. Recruited, trained, and managed by WyAC members, thousands of volunteers have generated resources, worked on projects, and helped with anything that needs to be done at the local programs. Well trained volunteers have covered long crisis line shifts, gone to hospitals and police stations in the middle of the night to support victims, accompanied victims to court, provided emergency resources, helped care for children, and slept in un-staffed safe houses because victims were too scared to stay alone.

### *Secrets to Success*

The WyAC's strength is due in part to its commitment to the success of the AmeriCorps program and continued innovation to make the program better. The WyAC Project has become a reality across Wyoming with the support of a state coalition that can absorb the administrative duties, assist with the match requirements and provide on-going technical assistance.

What makes this program really work is the emphasis on individualized member training, mentoring, and job shadowing by site supervisors and other local staff. This dynamic produces well trained member advocates who quickly gain knowledge and develop skills that allow them to become effective advocates, providing multiple services. This is a multi-site project and is a well thought through and implemented program design. The WyAC Project attracts members with devotion and commitment to the work.

## Economic Opportunity



Improving the financial well-being and security of economically disadvantaged individuals is a top priority for the programs in this category. The programs utilize resources that community members need by offering community-based programming to increase economic opportunity. Some programs focus on advancing the literacy skills of low-income individuals and new immigrants to increase their employability, such as the Community Technology Empowerment Project (pictured above).



## Community Technology Empowerment Project

In the Community Technology Empowerment Project (CTEP), AmeriCorps members provide technology instruction to improve the computer literacy, and ultimately the employability, of unemployed and underemployed individuals. CTEP serves Minnesota's Twin Cities metro area and targets individuals who are low-income, newly American and/or living in minority communities, or have disabilities. Full-time members are placed in public computer centers to target the focus areas of economic opportunity and capacity building.

Members teach technology and job-placement skills using standardized curriculum developed and tested by the St. Paul Public Library based on the five Northstar Digital Literacy Standards: Basic Computer Use, Internet, Operating Systems, Email and Word Processing. Depending on the site, CTEP members instruct in a one-on-one capacity or in a classroom-type setting in formal train-to-work programs.

### *Program Innovations*

CTEP's goal for 2013-14 is that 2,000 community members will pass 6,000 assessments, representing a total value of \$2.01 million. For the certification element alone, every \$1 invested in CTEP returns \$2.63 in benefit to the community.

Members build agency capacity by providing skilled people to deliver technology instruction aligned to community needs; recruiting, training and supervising volunteers; performing a community service project intended to overcome barriers to program effectiveness (e.g. increasing internet security); and securing in-kind donations of hardware and software to contribute to the program's sustainability in the community.

For the first time, CTEP has institutionalized standards, curriculum and assessments across all service sites. The Consortium provides free training to AmeriCorps members in administering the assessments, as well as a process to ensure that the assessments remain up to date as technology changes. As part of this certification program, the return on investment is clearly articulated when comparing to similar programs in the private sector.

CTEP has been approached by organizations in San Francisco, Denver, Columbus and Austin with requests to promote the partnership model for community technology instruction and capacity building. CTEP is currently exploring a model to replicate the program through an AmeriCorps National Direct grant, as a way to expand programming to these areas.

**Issue Areas: Economic Opportunity; Capacity Building**

### **Innovative Elements**

- Ability to adjust program to community needs
- Measure of success through assessments and employment.

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The success that CTEP has enjoyed in marketing and implementing the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments has moved nationally beyond its network. For example, Robbinsdale Area Schools and Normandale Community College, in the Twin Cities, will begin using the Northstar assessments to assess the needs of incoming students. Further, the curriculum is being shared and adopted in libraries across the country.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) singled out CTEP as a national model for community partnership in teaching technology literacy to low-income communities. In March 2010, the FCC invited a CTEP member to provide testimony before members of Congress at the Digital Inclusion Summit in Washington, DC. Inspired in part by the success of CTEP, the FCC is now considering the development of a National Digital Literacy Corps.

### *Secrets to Success*

CTEP's own experience supports the critical need for technology literacy programming in disadvantaged communities, where access to computers, the Internet and effective instruction are scarce. Individual's skill-building progress is measured through online pre- and post-assessments specifically designed to measure proficiency in the Northstar Digital Literacy Standards. Not only do the Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments provide CTEP with an objective manner to measure increases in technology literacy, but passing the assessments also provides basic technology skill certification to participants which assists in obtaining employment. Following certification, participants work with CTEP members to apply these skills in real-world settings: searching for jobs and completing online job applications.

CTEP's success also comes from its ability to respond to the needs of the communities it serves. CTEP's success in closing these gaps has led US Senator Amy Klobuchar to endorse CTEP as a "vital asset" in bridging this digital divide. One hundred percent of CTEP partner agencies in the last four years reported an increase in their capacity to serve underserved residents as the result of the CTEP AmeriCorps Members' service. Last year, CTEP surpassed performance targets in all areas: CTEP members taught technology skills to over 6,500 participants and of those receiving job coaching over 500 gained employment. CTEP members mobilized over 700 volunteers who served over 21,000 hours. Members completed 185 capacity-building projects at 27 sites, surpassing our goal of 90 projects. CTEP's track record of 100% enrollment and retention of our members for the past four years further demonstrates that the positive and powerful experience the program provides for members as well as the impact made on the community.





## Peace Corps Fellows Program in Community Development

The Peace Corps Fellows Program is a pre-professional corps of rural community and economic developers. The program recruits

recently returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs) into a two-year graduate program at Western Illinois University (WIU). Fellows receive specialized training in community and economic development during the first year in the program, in order to prepare them for an eleven-month, community-based internship and full-time AmeriCorps assignment in the second year of the program. During their AmeriCorps service, Fellows lead community and economic development projects and are responsible for mobilizing local volunteers to assist with the implementation of projects such as: downtown revitalization, business retention and expansion, entrepreneurship development, tourism development, community housing, health education and outreach, volunteer management, and organizational capacity building.

### *Program Innovations*

When applying to the program, prospective Fellows/Members select a master's degree program from one of eight partnering graduate programs at WIU; these include:

- Business Administration (MBA)
- Economics
- Educational & Interdisciplinary Studies (TESOL)
- Geography (GIS, Regional Planning)
- Health Science (Public Health)
- Political Science (Public Policy)
- Recreation, Park, and Tourism Administration
- Sociology

In addition to their graduate coursework, Fellows/Members participate in specialized training in community and economic development while on campus and are then enrolled as full-time AmeriCorps (AC) Members assigned to community-based internships during the second year of the program.

**Issue Areas: Economic Opportunity; Capacity Building**

**Designations: Rural Impact**

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Employing previous Peace Corps volunteers to implement projects
- Lasting impact in rural communities

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*“We're able to accomplish goals/objectives that better our community because of the PCF/AmeriCorps Program.”*

*- Rachel Lester, McDonough  
County Housing Authority.*

Peace Corps Fellows apply their unique set of experiences, training, and skills to underserved communities in Illinois, thereby providing much needed technical assistance, in a hands-on manner. This model meets local goals, builds local capacity, increases civic engagement, and provides sustainable progress through measureable results.

This program builds on the Peace Corps model by recruiting returned Peace Corps volunteers (RPCVs) to serve AmeriCorps assignments in underserved, rural communities in Illinois.

Generous financial and education packages are available to Members and academic credit is awarded for AmeriCorps service. Relevant professional development, in addition to academic preparation, is provided to Members throughout the service year.

*"I have learned to expect great things from the PCF/AC members. Kara consistently FAR exceeded my high expectations in the quality of her work, her professionalism and her drive...Kara sought out innovative ways for United Way to be more efficient and better equipped to manage volunteers. Her fingerprints will be on lasting changes for years."*

*-Jill Beck, United Way of McDonough County.*

*"Peace Corps Fellows are very resourceful. They are used to working with limited resources and instruction. They require little management and have a very strong work ethic and proven desire to make a difference. [Our AC member] was well prepared to develop, implement, evaluate and modify our colleague wellness program."*

*- Kim Luz, St. John's Hospital.*

The PCF program also allows host sites/rural communities to access individuals with unique skills, experiences, advanced training, and global perspectives. If not for this program, these communities would not likely attract or retain such individuals.

#### *Secrets to Success*

The PCF program consistently meets and/or exceeds targets of recruiting and managing local volunteers to implement local community development projects,

building host site capacity by strengthening organizational structure and adopting volunteer management best practices, and preparing members for meaningful work after service – e.g., 100% employment rate among graduates of program in 2011, 2012, and 2013. The secrets to success are the PCF's adherence to quality partnerships, transparent processes, and action plans based on local priorities. Additionally, PCF focuses on leveraging all resources to the maximum potential at all times.



## Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) AmeriCorps

The Rural Improvement for Schooling and Employment (RISE) Program was created by Nebraska State Probation focused on a research-supported need to enhance public safety and improve the lives of adult and juvenile probationers in rural areas. The RISE Program was implemented in 2007 with the support of AmeriCorps members. The RISE Program was created following receipt of a research study conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice, which showed high risk adult and juvenile probationers improve success on probation when they develop skills focused on education and employment. The RISE Program creates opportunities by utilizing a research-supported curriculum to focus on employment, graduation and post-high school education. This is accomplished by teaching adult and juvenile probationers skills in each of these areas. First, adults and juveniles learn skills to assist with lifelong employment success. Second, juveniles struggling to complete high school are taught skills focused on success at school.

In addition to facilitating the curriculum, AmeriCorps members, titled RISE Program Specialists, also collaborate with and support the local communities. AmeriCorps members reach out to employers, schools and other community supports to encourage them to engage in the program. This collaboration allows the AmeriCorps members to bring in volunteers to the groups of probationers that can enhance the skill-building process. These volunteers speak to the probationers about job expectations, college funding options and available high school extra-curricular activities.

Finally, the RISE Program is also focused on supporting and continuing success for the probationers after they complete the program. Juveniles in the program focused on high school graduation also receive support in the school setting. The AmeriCorps members serve within the school, making contact with teachers, counselors and families. Additionally, those adults and juveniles engaging in post-high school education, have the support of the AmeriCorps member to assist them with college campus tours, locating funding and registering for classes. The extensive support the AmeriCorps Members offer to adults and juveniles on probation is the key to successful probation completion and safer communities in Nebraska.

**Issue Areas: Criminal Justice; Economic Opportunity**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

**Innovative Elements**

- Partnerships with other Nebraska Programs
- Replicable curriculum

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### *Program Innovations*

The RISE Program has shown lasting impact on members, communities and the state in several different ways. The RISE Program is focused on helping adult and juvenile probationers succeed and have excelled with a 73% total success rate over the last five years showing adult and juvenile probationers who graduate from RISE have not returned to the probation system a year after completion. This exceeds Nebraska State Probations estimated 50% overall success rate for all probationers, showing a great community safety need for the RISE Program.

The RISE Program is dedicated to being a leader in criminal justice by ensuring a strong record of compliance. Furthermore, the RISE Program Director or members are present at all service-focused events, as well as active in conducting impactful projects, such as the ServeNebraska Symposium and the Cornhusker Community Book Drive.

With the creation of the RISE AmeriCorps Program and the implementation of statewide curriculum and workbooks, the program has not only had more than a 70% success rate, but also has been a model program that other agencies statewide and nationwide can duplicate. As the RISE AmeriCorps Program has grown, the need for a consistent workbook was identified. With implementation of this workbook statewide, the program has moved towards the mission to provide the potential for other states nationwide to benefit from the program is attainable.

### *Secrets to Success*

The secret to the RISE Programs success has three parts: members, support, and research-based curriculum. The RISE Program Specialists/AmeriCorps members are essential. The devotion to service that AmeriCorps members possess allows them to work with probationers at a different level than a probation officer. They are looked at by the probationer as a support and this allows the probationers to open up to them and celebrate their success. We have heard RISE Program Specialists say the probationers tell them, “I didn’t think anyone cared until I got in this program.”

The Nebraska Probation Administrator brought AmeriCorps to the probation program and knew the service it could give probation would be successful. Plus, there is additional program support from ServeNebraska and other State Probation Program Administrations for the RISE Program Specialists and Supervisors. The support also includes encouragement for the RISE Program and AmeriCorps Members to promote days of service as well as promote the RISE Program to all local agencies.

The final secret to the program’s success is their research-based curriculum, supported by an identified need and the foundation of evidence-based practices. Nebraska Probation is confident that when a program is created with strong supporting research, it will be successful and that has been shown in what the RISE Program has been able to offer probationers in rural areas of Nebraska during the past five years.

## Education



The programs in this section offer services to students in communities across the country to reach their full academic potential, K-12 and beyond. Programs fill the gap between what schools and teachers can provide and what students really need. Mentoring students and providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to graduate from college are common methods used by programs, such as Clayton State University AmeriCorps. Despite their differences, each one of these programs has found an effective method that positively influences the education of students. Programs like Graceland University Youth Launch (pictured above) assist students in achieving educational success and building developmental assets.



## ACE: A Community for Education at the University of Texas at Austin Charles A. Dana Center

ACE: A Community for Education is a research-based, bilingual early literacy program at the University of Texas-Austin. ACE AmeriCorps members tutor kindergarten, first and second grade students using a model that has proven effective in helping 75% of students reach or exceed grade level reading by the end of the program. ACE's vision is that every child in Central Texas will become a successful reader by third grade, embarking on a path of excellence in school and life. Since 1994,

ACE has provided tutoring to more than 5,000 low-income students in Austin and Manor elementary schools and over one million hours of service to children and families in Central Texas.

ACE bases its approach on a defined curriculum that allows the program to start working with each child at an appropriate level of instruction based on current needs, and helps build a child's confidence in core reading concepts. Over the years, ACE has discovered that its literacy tutoring programs are vital to the community because on average, 88% of low-income children come to school not ready for kindergarten and are behind their more affluent peers in school readiness skills. Currently, ACE is the only available literacy resource outside of the classroom in partner schools. ACE also provides a critical bilingual framework for schools where 98% are minority students, primarily Hispanic. In 2014, ACE plans to engage more AmeriCorps tutors and reach more children than ever before, sending 100 tutors into 25 local schools to provide reading interventions for an estimated 2,200 students.

### *Program Innovations*

Each team of tutors uses an ACE lesson framework aligned with national reading research and the state curricular guidelines (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), customized to grade level. ACE K-2 tutors provide instruction using a proven Response-to-Intervention model, which helps tutors and supervisors to tailor the instruction to each particular student. ACE provided one-to-one reading tutoring to 2,045 individual children in 2012-13. All of these students started the year behind grade level benchmarks in reading, and approximately 189 students received more than one type of intervention. In last year's tutoring, 75% of students reached benchmarks during treatment, and 73% maintained grade level in reading by the year's end. Most importantly, a comparison group analysis conducted by the Meadows Center for Educational Risk showed

### Issue Areas: Early Childhood Literacy

### Innovative Elements

- Long term presence in the community
- AmeriCorps members receive teaching certification
- Partnership with Minnesota Reading Corps, Austin Independent School District, and the University of Austin

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unequivocally that without literacy intervention from an ACE AmeriCorps tutor, the kindergarten and first grade children in the program would not have progressed in reading.

### *Exceptional Partnerships*

ACE is pioneering an innovative partnership with the Texas Region XIII Alternative Certification Program that allows qualified ACE tutors to obtain teaching certification during their term of service. Surveys indicate that ACE alumni who teach remain in the classroom longer than the national retention average, and members stay in the education field even if they leave the classroom. In 2013, 40 out of 100 tutors are exploring ways to earn their professional teaching certificate through the Region XIII partnership.

In 2008, ACE began a cross-state partnership with Serve Minnesota and Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC) to incorporate the use of AmeriCorps members as tutors. As a result of this partnership, ACE expanded from 4 schools to 25 schools and from only 250 to over 2,000 students served in four years. ACE continues to work with MRC as a partner, exploring how to best expand the MRC Response-to-Intervention model. ACE's partnership with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) continues to deepen as well: this year ACE will not only be a partner with AISD, but qualified to become an official Evaluation Partner with the district.

*“ACE saw in me what I was never able to see before. I successfully led a team of tutors and started education classes at Austin Community College – something I never thought I’d do. I’ve learned I’m really good at teaching, and this spring I was asked by the principal at my school to apply for a full-time teaching-assistant position for next year while I continue my education.”*

*-Rosa C., 2011-2013 ACE tutor and team leader*

ACE encourages AmeriCorps tutors to continue service outside the classroom by forming community partnerships with other area nonprofit organizations. Last year, tutors donated volunteer hours to 44 area nonprofits including Boys and Girls Club of America, Urban Roots, and Latinitas. After serving, 90% of ACE AmeriCorps alumni continue to serve their communities.

### *Secrets to Success*

The ACE tutoring program is intensive—AmeriCorps tutors see each child daily for 30 minutes of tutoring. Second, the program monitors each child's progress weekly, and performs benchmark reading assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of each year. On average, tutors receive over 60 hours of training on early reading strategies, and are supervised and supported on-site by ACE literacy experts. ACE also provides tutors with a transformative service experience. Tutors report that no matter which career they go on to pursue, they understand the power of public education and the critical role literacy plays in all levels of learning. This transformative experience has provided an engine for expansion as well; many former ACE tutors become leaders in order to stay involved with ACE's mission and work.



## AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches

In 2012, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) and the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) entered into a strategic partnership to develop and implement the AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches initiative. The OACC received two AmeriCorps grants from ServeOhio to implement the program. The AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches program places college graduates, preferably with community college experience, onto Ohio community college campuses to provide in-depth, hands-on guidance and assistance to students who need extra support on their college completion path. In the second year of the program, support from Coaches will be embedded in course sections identified by participating colleges. Potential candidates for the course-embedded support model include Developmental English and Math, First Year Experience (FYE), and college skills courses. At the end of the three-year project period, it is expected that those served will demonstrate higher credit hour accumulation, higher persistence rates, and higher college completion rates compared to those not provided with intensive college completion coaching.

Specifically, AmeriCorps members provide services to a cohort of up to 100 students. Members provide personal consultations throughout the academic year to create and monitor on-time completion plans. They conduct workshops throughout the year orienting students to resources and services on campus, and cover topics including civic engagement, financial literacy, and college financial aid. Finally, the program provides volunteer and community engagement opportunities through the AmeriCorps days of service.

### *Program Innovations*

During the program's 2012-2013 pilot year, 22 Members served at ten Ohio community colleges. These Members coached over 1,200 students whom were provided with 2,777 unique coaching services including workshops, one-on-one advising and referrals. In the 2013-2014 program year, 25 AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches will provide hands-on guidance and assistance to 2,200 first-time community college students in developmental education classes, first year experience, and college skills or success classes on eleven community college campuses.

This program brought together community colleges from various geographic areas serving diverse student populations. The Coaches program has provided a unique opportunity for cross-institution networking and sharing of resources related to a host of initiatives. On participating

**Issue Areas: College completion**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Partnerships with multiple community colleges
- Cross-institution networking
- Tailored consultations to individual needs

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community college campuses, the program has also created opportunities for the Coaches and supervisors to collaborate with faculty.

### *Secrets to Success*

Of the total community college students who were assigned an AmeriCorps College Completion Coach, 738 students completed one or more credit hours of developmental education. Of this group, 506 students completed all of their attempted developmental education courses.

AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches moved the needle on the following groups:

- 317 students completed their development education courses and enrolled into college level courses
- 172 students progressed from developmental English to enrollment in college-level English
- 80 students progressed from developmental Math to enrollment in college-level Math
- 410 students earned the expected credits for a part-time student and 117 students earned the expected number of first-year credits for a full-time student. This is almost double the anticipated percentage of students to achieve first year credit hour milestones of 21%
- AmeriCorps College Completion Coaches recruited 706 college students to engage in 62 service projects providing 1,255 hours of service during the 2012-2013 academic year

This program realizes such success rates for many reasons. One, most of the members are graduates of the schools in which they are placed. This “institutional knowledge” for navigating the campus and systems has been an extraordinary asset for the program. Second, the program is focused on providing individual services, whether health, financial, family or education. This gets to the heart of making sure each student has a support network to share accomplishments and address challenges. Third, the program has immense support from leadership at each school and is spearheaded by the most pertinent partner and staff.

## Clayton State University AmeriCorps Program



Clayton State University (CSU) AmeriCorps Members annually tutor over 200 high school students at risk for academic failure and/or dropping out. This AmeriCorps program has been an important resource that Clayton State used to support the local school district, after the school district lost its accreditation two years ago. The CSU AmeriCorps program was so impactful, that even after accreditation was restored, the AmeriCorps program remained in high demand. 78% of the students tutored showed an increase in their overall grade average and of those students, 72% of student's grades improved by five points or more. In addition to tutoring, CSU AmeriCorps members conduct a Spring Break College and Career camp for high school students. Members participate in local community service projects, recruit community volunteers, and serve as one of the most popular groups on the Clayton State University campus. This past year, CSU Members recruited 160 volunteers who collectively served over 1,000 hours at various community service projects including the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, Make a Difference Day, and a 5K Race benefiting Georgia's Wounded Heroes.

### *Program Innovations*

CSU AmeriCorps serves one of the most high need school districts in Georgia which has connected district high school students to the Clayton State campus. The AmeriCorps program reports that many members are now teaching in the school district, and high school students who were served by AmeriCorps members are now attending Clayton State and becoming AmeriCorps members themselves. New AmeriCorps members are oftentimes high school students who were mentored or tutored by an AmeriCorps member, so there is a strong connection to service. Members wear AmeriCorps identity at every service event and are often called upon by local mayors and city council members to lead service events in the local community. CSU AmeriCorps members have the opportunity to travel abroad through Clayton's alternative spring break program. Many members have gone on to join Peace Corps or other international service efforts.

### Issue Area: High School Completion

### Innovative Elements

- CSU AmeriCorps alternative spring break program
- Active program alumni group

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### *Secrets to Success*

This program is greatly successful because Clayton State University is a service institution. CSU invests much time in service-learning and sees AmeriCorps as one of its most effective programs in reaching the surrounding community. Another reason for success is the high demand for AmeriCorps programs in Clayton County. The community, spanning from the school to the Mayor's office, understands AmeriCorps' contributions and see the direct impact of the programs. CSU staff and members have made this program one of the most popular programs on campus because their lives have been changed for the better through AmeriCorps.

A second year member, who was tutored as a high school student, noted the program's secrets to success when she shared her story with the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism Board. She spoke about the pride she feels serving as an AmeriCorps member because prior to her having an encouraging AmeriCorps mentor, she had no plans to even to go college. This relationship not only encouraged her to go to college, but to return in service as an AmeriCorps member to mentor younger high school students to continue the cycle.





## College Possible Omaha AmeriCorps

College Possible is making college graduation possible for low-income Omaha students through an intensive program of coaching and support. In Omaha, College Possible serves eight partner high schools across metro area school districts, and has involved college students at local and regional colleges and universities. During the 2013-14 academic year, the organization is slated to serve 1,390 students. This total number of students served includes attendees to College Possible's College Prep Talk workshops, and high school juniors, seniors and college students served regularly through core programming. Direct services of the program are provided by recent college graduates, referred to as "near peer" coaches, through AmeriCorps. In order to fulfill its mission, College Possible strives to:

- Identify low-income students with the potential to succeed in higher education
- Once in college, College Possible supports students in identifying majors, courses and academic supports that will lead to college success
- Increase students' understanding of the admissions process and improve college admission rates
- Ensure adequate financial aid for students
- Build and sustain peer networks to provide social and cultural support
- Start all students on the college-going track early.

College Possible is a national movement that addresses the systemic root of the achievement gap by providing intensive programming to support students from their junior year of high school through college graduation. College Possible Omaha, as well as programs in the Twin Cities, Milwaukee, WI and Portland, OR, provides additional support to low-income students by addressing the social, psychological, and information gaps that they face, and providing them with the guidance and tools to become competitive in college admissions and academics.

### *Program Innovations*

The most recent and compelling data documenting the organization's impact are found in results from a 2013 randomized controlled trial (RCT) by Harvard Kennedy School Professor Dr. Christopher Avery. The study shows College Possible has a significant positive effect on enrollment for low-income students into four-year colleges and universities. College Possible is the first and only college access organization to attempt such a rigorous evaluation.

Direct program services of College Possible are delivered by AmeriCorps Members, who are supervised by full-time staff, and provide one-on-one and group guidance to low-income students through every stage of the college process. College Possible hires recent college

#### Issue Area: Success in Higher Education

#### Innovative Elements

- Rigorous evaluation of program and curriculum
- Successful replication in Twin Cities, Milwaukee, and Portland

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graduates and provides them with intensive, ongoing training and a structured curriculum to serve as full-time coaches to students in high school and college. These idealistic, motivated leaders are powerful messengers. Coaches work with students every day as full-time mentors, giving them the support that they need. The coaches' commitment to a year-long term of service ensures they will bring the passion and energy to achieve the level of intensity necessary for outstanding results. The organization began in 2000 in the Twin Cities, had a successful implementation in Milwaukee and now, with College Possible Omaha there is proof that the program's curriculum replicates successfully.

### *Secrets to Success*

College Possible believes in ripples. The organization holds tight to the belief that every action toward the goal of college graduation sends out a small ripple of hope regarding the cause of education equity. Each staff and team meeting starts by sharing these ripples. The "near peer" relationship fostered between the AmeriCorps Members, who are recent college graduates, and the students they serve uniquely characterizes College Possible's work in college access. These coaches become special guides, role models and sources of accountability in the lives of students. Many of the College Possible coaches are first generation college graduates themselves, and reflect their students' lives. Thus, the AmeriCorps members working with College Possible are one of the major reasons for current success rates. College Possible students graduate college at a rate of 57%, five times greater than their low-income peers and equal with all income levels nationally. A 2011 Harvard University study shows that the College Possible program model more than doubles the chances of a low-income student enrollment in a four-year institution. College Possible Members helped at least 85% of seniors earn admission to an institution of higher education, and helped at least 85% of seniors apply for financial aid.

## Graceland University AmeriCorps Youth Launch



The Graceland University AmeriCorps Youth Launch (AYL) provides positive youth development activities that build a youth-serving network in a six county region in south-central Iowa. This program assists students in achieving educational success and building developmental assets through the involvement and support of community partners. The mission of AYL is to provide opportunities for students to lead successful, rewarding and productive lives. AmeriCorps members build valuable developmental assets, instill civic engagement and help young people find the “sparks” that ignite their passions in life. AmeriCorps members serve in school-based and/or community-based host sites developing and strengthening programs that promote positive youth development through the 5 promises; caring adults, safe places to learn and develop, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others. Through partnerships with various community entities and volunteers, members promote enrichment activities to strengthen and sustain out-of-school programming and fulfill the goals of the AYL program. Enrichment activities may include career shadowing, drama, drug prevention, nutrition, life skills, personal safety and recreation.

### *Program Innovations*

The AmeriCorps Youth Launch (AYL) program creates a lasting impact on members and their community by working to change the culture in youth development. This concept of developing youth for the community within the community is a sustaining effort to continue to grow rural Iowa. These programs allow for that to happen by creating “sparks” in a child’s life.



Last program year, after a delegation of youth from the Lamoni, IA community attended the Governor’s Summit, they returned home saying they needed to have

this event at their own school. The planning began the next day. Through student led groups and planning committees, the school was able to execute their first ever Bullying Prevention Summit with multiple workshops lead by community leaders, professionals, caring adults, and youth. It was so successful that it is continuing this year in other schools of the south central Iowa region. This was all started through the support of Graceland University and Dekko Foundation as strong partners of the programs.

**Issue Area:** Youth Development; Education

**Designation:** Rural impact

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Partnerships within communities
- Alumni retention to the program

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The program and community have a strong theme going throughout their programming and that is, changing the culture to support the children first and make sure they are well. They want the standard greeting in the community to be “How are the children” (based on an African Proverb) which puts the focus on supporting youth.

### An active alumni group

The AmeriCorps Youth Launch program keeps a strong connection with their alumni. Their alumni sometimes continue to serve with National Service programs, continue their education, and stay within the community for employment. The current program director is an alumna of the AYL program, even some of the program supervisors are alumna of the program. This creates for a strong volunteerism and national service connection within the community. The programs utilize alumna for training presenters, speaking engagements such as recruitment opportunities, and potential host sites for members or volunteer projects. They stay connected with them through the programs’ Facebook page and other ongoing social media communication.



### *Secrets to Success*

In the fall of 2011, the program completed an evaluation that surveyed all members and supervisors who participated in the program that year. The AmeriCorps and youth development training received, for the majority, good or excellent in the evaluation review. Over 80% rated the program as “strengthening community” as good or excellent. Almost 95% felt the program builds positive assets within the youth served. Finally, over 95% felt the program is effective in impacting youth positively.

The secrets to making a program structure work so smoothly is through the support of all the partners involved. If only one group or person was involved, the AYL program would not be able to achieve as much as it has done. The networking and collaboration that goes on creates a win-win-win situation. All the activities, volunteers, service days, etc., match the mission of Graceland University which makes it such a great fit to be housed within the University. This creates a stronger connection to the community, the media presence, the financial support, and overall caring and giving back to the community. There is not one key player, and all parties involved are aware of that. Everyone cares about the community and what they are doing to help the youth. All parties involved have the passion for the youth and they really are living the African Proverb, “How are the children?” and the goal is to have the answer as “The children are well”.

## Higher Achievement



Higher Achievement's afterschool and summer academic program gives youth from at-risk communities their best opportunity to succeed in middle school — and in life. Higher Achievement has served more than 10,000 middle school youth

in the Washington, DC area since 1975. Approximately 520 volunteer mentors commit to working with scholars once each week.

In the 2012-2013 grant year, 400 DC scholars received rigorous academic enrichment support and mentoring through the Afterschool Academy, Summer Academy and High School Placement program components. Scholars demonstrated improvement in academic performance, measured in grade increases in math or language arts, standardized test scores, and school attendance. Higher Achievement graduates advanced to college preparatory-level high school programs. Additionally, Higher Achievement was designated a low risk program after Serve DC's 2012-2013 site visit.

Higher Achievement reported the following academic gains for scholars during the 2012-2013 school year:

- 75% of scholars increased reading grades or maintained an A/B average.
- 75% of scholars improved their attendance or maintained fewer than 5 absences.
- With 83 scholars, the organization celebrated its largest class of graduates in May 2013. Ninety-nine percent of these graduates were placed in schools of choice, and 82% of graduates are now attending the city's top high schools.

### *Program Innovations*

School partners ensure access to quality facilities, assist with recruitment, and share data to allow Higher Achievement to align activities and support services to meet scholars' academic goals. Elective partners provide engaging, enriching activities that promote a range of youth development outcomes and help boost scholar retention. Volunteer recruitment partners provide access to hundreds of prospective academic mentors per year: Bates White, Deloitte, the US Department of Education, and university partners including DC Reads at Catholic University, American University, and George Washington University. Alumni partners provide increased support for alumni, such as, Capital Partners for Education, Onward Consulting, and the College and Credential Completion Network. Urban Teacher Center, Ford's Theatre, and Let's Go Boys and Girls (robotics programming) are curriculum and instruction partners that provide needed resources for scholars. OSSE is a data sharing partner that provides access to scholar data.

**Issue Areas:** High School Completion; College Preparation

**Innovative Elements**

- Alumni reunion
- Partnerships with government, corporate, and nonprofit providers

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### An active alumni group

Higher Achievement is committed to increasing the support offered to alumni, to further promote the college and career readiness of Higher Achievement scholars. The program is focusing on:

- Dedicating an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer to high school alumni support systems
- Strengthening a Leadership Council for high school alumni and Alumni Council for post-high school alumni
- Planning the second annual alumni workshop, featuring college access and other local service providers

### *Secrets to Success*

Higher Achievement's proven and successful model is based on its theory of change. The program showers scholars with academic opportunities—three academic mentors per scholar, an accelerated, hands-on curriculum centered on social justice themes, university stays, academic contests, and top school placement and scholarships. These opportunities, unmatched in most out-of-school time programs, set into motion a virtuous cycle of achievement in which opportunities increase interest, interest increases effort, effort increases achievement, and achievement leads to additional opportunities. Higher Achievement is further grounded by a culture of Spirit, Excellence, Respect, and Collaboration. Each day at Center, scholars learn to hold each other accountable, speak with confidence and lead by example. Scholars are instructed to stand when addressing a group, speak clearly, and challenge each other with follow-up questions. Higher Achievement also maximizes community resources, by utilizing 520 volunteer mentors who commit to working with our scholars once each week.

## Island Fellows AmeriCorps Program



Maine has 15 year-round island communities, down from more than 100 a century ago. These communities are each unique, but all struggle with issues which threaten their viability. Many

of these issues are common to isolated rural towns across the country, but being offshore—in some cases far offshore—exacerbate the challenges. The Island Fellows AmeriCorps Program uses an innovative program model to address issues, such as, limited economic opportunities for families and youth; a high reliance on uncertain fisheries incomes; declining school enrollment numbers; inadequate energy efficiency of aging homes and high fuel and electricity costs; diminished housing affordability for year-round residents as a result of skyrocketing real estate values; limited access to health and medical services (particularly for the elderly and youth); and limited availability of local produce and other healthy foods.

For almost 15 years, the Island Institute's Island Fellows AmeriCorps Program has placed recent college graduates to live and work in these rural communities for one to two years of service to address these important rural issues. In that time, they have been deployed to address over 90 local projects supporting community sustainability. The Island Fellows AmeriCorps Program annually deploys ten members in these remote coastal island communities to develop and implement service learning projects that address critical community needs.

The ten members of the Island Fellows AmeriCorps program are enrolled for one year terms, with the option of expanding their service to two years. During this time, they participate in trainings to benefit both their own professional development, as well as their project. They are part of a cohort and meet monthly for trainings or networking. Through this cohort, members create connections between isolated island and coastal communities and develop a professional network. It is a goal of the program to create professional experiences on islands and in Maine that allows these, and other young professionals to remain in the area. The members are trained in service-learning and volunteer mobilization as well as capacity building and sustainability. Because schools represent the lifeblood of these small communities, each member is tasked with creating sustainable service-learning projects; designing and implementing volunteer management strategies, and building capacity for the time beyond their service.

**Issue Areas:** Education;  
Capacity Building

**Designation:** Rural Impact

**Innovative Elements**

- Effective use of member feedback
- Members living with the communities to identify needs

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### *Program Innovations*

The Island Fellows AmeriCorps Program was designed to ensure powerful service experiences for members and volunteers in participating communities. All members live in these remote towns and are expected to integrate into their host communities, attending town meetings, participating in social and service activities, taking notes and writing articles for the Island Institute's Working Waterfront newspaper. By developing strong community relationships, Members are able to address their projects within the broader community context. The program is a net importer of talent to the state and attempts to reverse the 'brain drain' that plagues Maine, with almost four of ten members staying on the island after their service. Even for those who do not stay in Maine, the experience creates a lifelong commitment to service. The program also places a large emphasis on project sustainability and local capacity building during each term of service. Program evaluation has shown that 88% of projects started through the program were believed to have a high to certain likelihood of continuing after the member's placement ended.

While members have always provided helping hands, they have become increasingly engaged in longer term solutions, such as research and assistance on energy efficiency savings in the schools, and developing new inter-school curricula that meets core standards but can be used with videoconferencing media for distance learning among remote islands. Additionally, the volunteer training that AmeriCorps Member/Fellows have been able to provide has been described as "invaluable", and success is being measured by changes in membership on local civic committees, town governments, and other volunteer positions.

### *Secrets to Success*

After many years of member services, Maine's island communities, and many isolated, rural, coastal communities compete each year for Fellows placements. In the past five years, communities have doubled their commitments for monetary and in-kind (such as housing) contributions toward Fellows placements, yet the number of fellow placements have remained the same. The Institute has prioritized the administration of this program by establishing a full-time staff position to coordinate all aspects of the program, and has greatly benefitted from the close communication provided by our "feet on the ground" members who live and work in these island communities. Their experiences have not only helped implement, but have also helped shape the program initiatives to ensure that we are serving the most pressing needs in these communities in the most effective ways. The members work to connect their communities with the many resources that the Island Institute can offer and the Island Institute is able to use the experience of the members to help inform the programmatic direction of the organization. By training, deploying and then responding to the member, the Island Institute is a more effective organization.

## Partners for After School Success



Partners for After School Success (PASS) is a collaborative, multi-site public/private partnership that provides development programming to middle and high school youth throughout rural and urban Dane County, Wisconsin. PASS responds to the educational needs of youth by placing 35 AmeriCorps members at school and community host sites in predominantly low-income or resource scarce communities. The goal of PASS is to improve the academic achievement

and school engagement of students through positive relationships. PASS volunteers provide literacy tutoring and academic support through 1:1 literacy tutoring to struggling readers for a minimum of 15 sessions over the course of a school year. Members also provide extensive learning programs that build social and life skills. PASS builds student skills through a variety of enrichment activities (art, media, sports, gardening, etc.), recreation and academic support and by aligning enrichment programs with school day learning. Also, PASS seeks to increase youth engagement in community service and volunteer opportunities by using a service-learning model. Members teach youth about community issues, lead them in planning events, and guide them to reflect on their accomplishment.

### *Program Innovations*

PASS provides over 150 hours of member training and is fully committed to member professional development to make being a PASS volunteer a life-changing experience. Member feedback in the annual Serve WI Member Survey suggests that the program is meeting this objective.

- 89% of members identified PASS as effective in improving basic work skills
- 99% identified that PASS helped prepare them to obtain future employment.
- 95% identified they are more likely to participate in volunteer service due to their PASS experience.

PASS members receive three trainings to understand and deliver quality extended learning programs including youth work skills (building relationships, group dynamics, managing behavior); school engagement (what it is, why it's important and how to impact it through programming); and how to develop enrichment programs that align with school day learning. Members developed 28 enrichment learning plans that align with common core standards and instructional learning while teaching social skills and having fun.

To maximize the impact, PASS applies a modified service-learning model. Youth learn about the issue to be addressed; help plan the event to promote youth voice, commitment and

**Issue Areas:** Low-Income Schools; Tutoring and Support

**Designation:** Rural Impact

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Professional development and career skills building
- Public/Private partnership
- Emphasis on service-learning

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empowerment; deliver the service with youth taking the lead; then reflect upon the event and celebrate accomplishments. PASS sites are also required to become generationOn Service Clubs, gaining full access to the site's resources. During the 2012-2013 term of service, PASS engaged 1,991 youth and adult volunteers who provided over 26,000 hours of service to the community. Many adults tutored youth in core subjects, ran enrichment programs or planned service events. This past service year, PASS members engaged 1,003 youth in the planning and delivery of 264 service events including a county-wide food drive; tutoring elementary youth; supporting the Humane Society; cleaning community parks and beautifying their neighborhoods through art projects, to name a few.

### Exceptional Partnerships

PASS is a program founded through community collaboration. This collaboration continues today as PASS partners include thirteen non-profit agencies that host members and pay a fiscal match to participate, collaborating with Dane County Human Services. It is a true public-private partnership as PASS can only exist because of the unique resources each entity brings to the project.

Every site has well-established relationships with neighborhood schools that continue to be strengthened as PASS aligns with school learning. PASS collaborates with several organizations in its volunteer efforts. PASS collaborates with ARC Wisconsin in service projects that encourage adults with disabilities to give back to their community. In the middle schools, PASS orients, supports and tracks the volunteer activities of math tutors with the Urban League Schools of Hope Program. Finally, in the Madison schools, Members collaborated with Special Olympics on Project Unify—an initiative that encourages students with and without disabilities to work together in sporting and service events.

*“Nothing beats watching middle school students do a quick little dance in the library to celebrate their literary accomplishments for the year. All of my students busted a move after I filled them in on their test results for the QRI. Of course I was proud of them, but what made me more proud was seeing how great they felt about themselves.”*

*-Kim Rosenthal, Bridge Lake Point  
Neighborhood Center Member*

### *Secrets to Success*

PASS provides high quality service grounded in research and delivered by well trained, committed AmeriCorps members. Literacy tutoring is based on models supported by CNCS America Reads and the Department of Education that promote use of structured, well planned, focused, sequenced tutoring sessions delivered consistently over the school year. Members participate in two, day-long trainings in preparation. The first training focuses on reading basics and assessment, the other on strategies to improve student reading skills in fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Members understand their role, take it seriously and feel great pride in student gains. PASS extended learning programming is also based on research that delivering sequenced, active, focused and explicit social-emotional skill development programming leads to better youth outcomes including school engagement and academics.

## Massachusetts Promise Fellowship



The Massachusetts Promise Fellowship (MPF) believes that all young people in Massachusetts have a right to the resources that they need to be successful in life, including a caring adult, a safe place, a healthy start, an effective education, and an opportunity to serve. MPF delivers these 5 promises to youth by training 40 emerging leaders who commit one year of AmeriCorps service to support and provide these needed resources to youth throughout

Massachusetts. Each year, non-profits, city agencies, and schools from across the state identify out-of-school time initiatives that will meet important needs in their communities and deliver critical youth development services in response to the high school dropout epidemic in Massachusetts. MPF selects corps member projects that are compelling, clearly meet an identified need, and provide members with a high level of project ownership. Forty Corps Members are recruited and placed at these organizations to participate in out-of-school time initiatives that serve young people in grades 4-12 and focus on mentoring, academic enrichment, college and career readiness, social and emotional learning, and service-learning.

All members work towards the goal of utilizing out-of-school time programming as a vehicle to increase youth academic engagement. Member activities include designing and implementing mentoring programs for elementary-aged youth, leading after-school tutoring programs, facilitating college exploration groups, implementing city-wide leadership councils, training youth to design community-service learning projects and carry them out in their communities, and recruiting volunteers to support these programs. MPF serves 800 youth annually through these corps-members led out-of-school time initiatives and hundreds more through ongoing events and workshops. In addition, MPF facilitates a social justice workshop series that encourages members to reflect on their own identities and dialogue with each other to share experiences and learn from each other.

Over its 14 year history, the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship has placed over 300 AmeriCorps members to serve youth at 127 partner organizations, including non-profits, city agencies, and schools, resulting in over 572,000 hours of volunteer service contributed to Massachusetts. Corps members have recruited and matched 1,750 mentors with youth in need of a caring adult in their life and have created out-of-school time programs for over 16,000 young people. They have built capacity at their host site organizations by recruiting over 12,600 volunteers to support these programs.

**Issue Area:** Primary and Secondary School Completion

**Designation:** Rural Impact

**Innovative Elements**

- Partnership for free classes for Corps members through Northeastern College
- Non Profit Leadership Institute

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MPF has also served as a bridge for partners to leverage resources to create new full-time staff positions. As a result of AmeriCorps member efforts, 33 members have been hired by their host site organization following their year of service from 2006-2013. In the 2013-2014 program, 50% of the Corps identify as persons of color and 20% are serving the neighborhoods that they call home. This diversity elevates the learning when corps members come together to dialogue and reflect on their service and support each other through challenges. A significant number of MPF

“MPF has helped pave the way for my professional goals. Before my year of service, I thought combining multimedia art and civic engagement was just a concept. After MPF I have seen it work first hand with talented and passionate youth.”

-Ellen Daoust, corps Member

members and alumni – 1 in 3 – were served by the MPF program as youth themselves, and sign on for a year of service following college graduation.

### *Program Innovations*

Since 2000, the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship (MPF) has been hosted by Northeastern University, a valuable sponsor and partner. MPF is housed in the Center of Community Service on campus and is part of

a team of professionals who work on service initiatives across the university. Several MPF corps members serving in the surrounding neighborhoods of the university serve as partnership liaisons between their host site and the university, ensuring a successful volunteer experience for Northeastern students that are meeting the needs of their organization. Through a unique agreement with Northeastern’s College of Professional Studies (CPS), corps members are able to take advantage of free courses with any program in the College while they are in service. Most recently, the agreement with CPS was extended to include a discount for MPF alumni for up to seven years beyond graduation from their service year. In 2010, MPF launched its Non-Profit Leadership Institute, a 10-month professional development program for corps members and MPF alumni focused on exploring leadership theory and networking with non-profit executives. In 2013, the Non-Profit Leadership Institute program received accreditation from CPS at Northeastern and all program graduates now receive 3 course credits for their participation upon completion of the program. In 2012, MPF expanded its services to youth by creating a series of college and career readiness events hosted at Northeastern University for all young people served by Fellow host sites. The quarterly events are designed and led by corps members and include sessions on the college experience, financial aid, leadership, and resume and interview skills. Since 2012, over 170 youth from across the state have attended these events.

### *Secrets to Success*

Since MPF’s inception in 1999, corps members have contributed over 572,000 hours of service to Massachusetts equating to \$15.6 million based on the Independent Sector’s value of a volunteer hour. In a 2012 annual alumni survey of former corps members, 100% of respondents reported that they continue to utilize the skills they gained during their service. 70% of alumni also indicated that they continue to volunteer in their communities and 25% serve as mentors to young people. Since 2011, an average of 40% of alumni has contributed an annual gift to MPF’s fundraising appeal.



**Engagement. Voice. Success.**

## Minnesota Alliance with Youth-Promise Fellows

Since 1997, the Minnesota Alliance with Youth (the Alliance) has utilized AmeriCorps members on the front line to deliver needed services to youth. Over the past 16 years, the Alliance and its numerous statewide partners have come together to lead the state's drop-out prevention efforts and work toward a common goal of 90% high school graduation by 2020. The Alliance was recently selected to be the state organizer for Grad

Nation, a movement of individuals, organizations, and communities who are working together to end America's dropout crisis.

The Alliance's Promise Fellows AmeriCorps program provides targeted and research-based interventions to 6th-10th graders who are at risk of dropping out. Members work in partnership with school staff and community organizations to identify youth who need support using early warning indicators known as the ABCs – Attendance, Behavior, and Core academic skills – at schools that have the highest annual dropout rates. AmeriCorps members implement interventions identified by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and the National Drop-out Prevention Center as the most effective for re-engaging youth in school and learning including, mentoring, high quality in/out of school activities, academic supports, and service-learning. With its broad-based support network and successful track record in youth development, the Alliance works in partnership with the MDE to raise graduation rates across the state.

### *Program Innovations*

AmeriCorps members provide the “people power” to allow schools and communities to intervene early and effectively and support students before they are in crisis. Members also help create a positive whole-school environment by recognizing student achievement, modeling positive behavior for students who might lack a strong adult example at home, and encouraging student participation in extracurricular activities. Nearly half of the members are serving in their home communities, more than 40% represent communities of color, 25% are from rural communities and many are first-generation college graduates. This adds up to one of the most diverse corps in the country and a network of lifelong advocates for national service.

MDE promotes the Alliance Promise Fellows program to districts with the highest needs as an effective strategy with grades 6-10. Since its inception, three lieutenant governors of Minnesota have co-chaired the Alliance alongside youth co-chairs. Several statewide organizations

**Issue Area: Drop-out Prevention**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Statewide public/private partnerships
- Alignment with community goals and adult partners

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(including the University of Minnesota, Youth Intervention Programs Association and Boys & Girls Clubs Alliance) and regional funders dedicate financial resources to ensure that low-income communities and schools can participate. This provides time and space for sites to develop sustainability plans and create community buy-in for the model. As the Grad Nation affiliate for Minnesota, the Alliance is a critical part of their coordinated approach to improve graduation rates to 90%. In Duluth, the first Grad Nation community in Minnesota, their partnership of individuals, nonprofit, government, and school officials including the mayor and superintendent – was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) as one of the nation's Together for Tomorrow Challenge winners.

The Alliance partners with other AmeriCorps programs to demonstrate long-term impact on the educational success of youth who receive interventions from a continuum of AmeriCorps programs. By aligning AmeriCorps resources with the community's goals, this collective is working to streamline processes for shared measurement/reporting systems, provide greater connectivity to enhance member experiences, strengthen support for schools and community organizations, and increase communication among the programs. The Alliance also partners with AmeriCorps members who are serving youth in community-based afterschool programs to streamline delivery of interventions and connect school and out-of-school time activities.

A central strategy of the program is to increase the number of caring adult volunteers in relationships with youth who exhibit the early warning signs for dropping out, and to engage these youth in service. Members match adult volunteers individually or with small groups of youth and provide academic enrichment activities, facilitate civic engagement experiences, promote leadership development/career exploration opportunities, and build positive relationships. More than 1,000 adult volunteers spent an average of 30 hours individually or in small groups with youth. In addition to adult volunteers, 2,700 youth engage in service to their communities each year. In order to effectively lead these activities, members are taught best practices in service-learning, including principles such as the importance of youth voice, assessing community needs, and reflection.

### *Secrets to Success*

Over the past seven years, the Alliance has mobilized nearly 55,000 volunteers who provided nearly 600,000 hours of service — a value of \$12.4 million. It successfully engaged youth in policy work to make youth voice the law in Minnesota. The Alliance has served more than 160,000 young people statewide and linked nearly 35,000 to service opportunities. In fact, 96% of youth surveyed believe they can make a difference in their community and 94% believe they can play an important role in improving their community.



## Read. Graduate. Succeed.

The initiative, now in its 8th year (newly renamed Read. Graduate. Succeed.) is a program model that embodies the concept of leveraged government resources. The program utilizes AmeriCorps members as tutoring program coordinators in schools identified with significant need, primarily focusing on students in 1st – 3rd grade who have been identified as not reading

at grade level. The STAR tutoring curriculum developed by the Utah State Office of Education is utilized as the evidence based intervention method. AmeriCorps members in each school recruit 30-60 volunteers (based on needs of the school) to serve as tutors who are then trained by the members in the STAR tutoring method to improve reading and literacy rates at schools.

In the first 7 years of operation, the program has served 37,418 students with 93% showing significant improved academic performance in reading and 75% reading at grade level by the end of the school year. During this same time the program has recruited over 35,000 volunteers who have served over 790,000 hours tutoring children in Utah schools.

### *Program Innovations*

The Utah Literacy Initiative (ULI) has a strong training and support system in place for members with 60% of members serving a second term of service, and about 30% going on to serve in 3rd and 4th years. Member development includes organizing the members into regional study groups, with a 2nd, 3rd or 4th year member acting as lead. This structure allows members to share best practices, reflect on lessons learned and service experiences, as well as developing a support system of other members in the same geographical region. In addition to significant training related to the tutoring program and working in schools, ULI members also receive public relations and communications training through the programs media partner, which gives them the tools and resources to communicate in a succinct and compelling way about their service. This training prepares members to share their stories to the broader community in ways that will increase interest in civic participation and volunteerism.

In 2011, the Utah Literacy Initiative developed a partnership with Read Today, an affiliate of the largest media company in the State, which provides extensive public exposure for this program. Over the last year alone Read Today produced over 100 news stories, which were aired on the Utah NBC affiliate KSL or published in print, and in addition brought the KSL news helicopter to a dozen participating schools to celebrate student achievement in reading. Read Today provides

#### Issue Area: Literacy

#### Designation:

- Governor and Mayor Initiative; Rural Impact

#### Innovative Elements

- Senior member training and support model
- Cross-sector community partnerships
- Incorporate experiences to increase volunteerism

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the public relations and communication training for members as well as a website that helps facilitate recruitment of volunteers.

Also, in 2011, the program finalized a partnership with the LDS Church to provide tutors in schools. The church has asked individuals in geographical regions across the state to volunteer to be the volunteer coordinator for that area. These coordinators work directly with AmeriCorps members in the schools to determine the need for volunteer tutors.

### *Secrets to Success*

Due to its successes, the program was submitted and funded as the Utah Governor and Mayor Initiative for the 2013/2014 program year. The new Read. Graduate. Succeed. AmeriCorps Program has an expanded program model that continues its emphasis on grade level reading and now includes a mentoring program in secondary schools, focusing on increasing the number of 7-12 grade students graduating. The same basic program model will be utilized in the upper grades with AmeriCorps members coordinating volunteer mentoring programs. This cradle-to-career pipeline of literacy tutoring, mentoring, and academic support will ensure participating elementary students are reading on grade level and participating junior high and high school students have a clear pathway to on-time high school graduation.

Through their successful faith-based/public/private partnerships, this AmeriCorps program is building a grassroots network of volunteers for the future and creating the infrastructure necessary to support and sustain long-term community transformation.



## Minnesota Reading Corps

Minnesota Reading Corps, a strategic initiative of ServeMinnesota, is an early literacy tutoring program that trains and deploys AmeriCorps members to ensure children are on a trajectory to become proficient readers by third grade. Since 2003, Minnesota Reading Corps has helped 100,000 struggling readers, age 3 to grade 3, progress toward reading proficiency by the end of third grade. At its inception, policy makers and literacy experts worked together and designed Minnesota Reading Corps to move the needle on reading proficiency. Reading Corps provides what struggling readers need – individualized, data-driven instruction, one-on-one attention, well-trained tutors coached by onsite literacy experts, interventions delivered with fidelity, and the frequency and duration necessary for student achievement.

The program trains AmeriCorps tutors to work with a daily caseload of students to deliver scripted literacy interventions that are grounded in extensive scientific research. Expert literacy coaches provide ongoing support and robust data toolsets (e.g. dashboards, individual student progress graphs, and one-click reports) that enable Reading Corps tutors, teachers and administrators to analyze literacy progress by student, classroom, school and district, and to use this information to accelerate learning for all students. Because of this data infusion, Reading Corps builds lasting change that ultimately improves literacy instruction system-wide. Struggling students are brought up to grade-level proficiency and schools improve their ability to use data to inform their instruction for all students.

Reading Corps preschool participants in Minneapolis Public Schools scored significantly higher in phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, and total literacy than children in matched comparison groups and Kindergarten-3rd grade participants across Minnesota demonstrated more than a year's worth of progress on proficiency indicators. Further, research conducted by the Center for Learning Solutions (2012) has shown that Reading Corps participants are three times less likely to be assigned to special education than non-participants, creating a permanent benefit to children and a significant on-going savings to schools.

### *Program Innovations*

Minnesota Reading Corps was designed from the ground up with input from a broad-based alliance of experts to create a system where AmeriCorps members administer individualized literacy interventions for children who were “falling through the cracks” in their classrooms. Program design partners included University of Minnesota and Oregon researchers, the St.

**Issue Area:** Early Childhood Literacy

**Designation:** Rural Impact

**Innovative Elements**

- Individualized literacy interventions for children
- Replicability
- Parent Engagement Strategy

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Croix River Education District, the Minnesota Consortium for Evidence in Education, as well as Head Start, school teachers and administrators. Reading Corps provides the key components to help educators transfer literacy science into hands-on support for struggling readers. Its evidence-based interventions correlate to the “Big Five Ideas” reported by the National Reading Panel (2001) and are grounded in extensive scientific research. With the people power of AmeriCorps resources, Reading Corps applies research, rigorous training, personalized tutoring, student assessments, and ongoing coaching to ensure data continually informs instructional practices.

As the program grew, individuals, businesses and nonprofits championed the program’s strengths and their contributions helped leverage state and federal dollars. Lasting relationships with Target, United Way and the Minnesota Department of Education have created systemic change in urban, suburban and rural districts and informed its work to replicate the program in other states.

### Potential for replication

By harnessing the power of national service, the Reading Corps model has already been adopted in seven states and the District of Columbia. It is part of Colorado’s Literacy Blueprint, and according to Iowa Governor Terry Branstad: “Reading Corps’ proven results and cost-effective model make this just the type of program that should be expanded to other states.” To further expand its impact, ServeMinnesota recently established a Reading Innovation Center to create a research-to-practice pipeline to identify and share the most effective literacy strategies to benefit students within and beyond Minnesota.

### *Secrets to Success*

Reading Corps tests new initiatives to improve student achievement including a parent engagement strategy to strengthen the bridge between in-school tutoring and home, a vocabulary acquisition intervention, and a Kindergarten-focused model where results show that students in this setting had a higher growth rate than Reading Corps students in a non K-Focus setting.

Minnesota Reading Corps combines the power of AmeriCorps service with the science of how children learn to read. It is one of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the country with more than 1,000 members serving in nearly 700 preschool and elementary schools in six states. This model fixes a critical link in literacy acquisition. By collecting and analyzing student data, Reading Corps is accelerating improvements in both students and systems. It uses validated assessments that are predictive of third-grade reading ability to identify struggling readers, set accurate literacy targets and intervene in literacy issues as early as age 3. After experiencing Reading Corps, many schools have integrated this data decision-making process into their instructional practices. Because of its remarkable success, Reading Corps has grown from serving just 250 students in 2003 to more than 30,000 annually – all while improving its effectiveness. By devoting AmeriCorps resources to help transfer literacy science into hands-on support for struggling readers, Reading Corps is improving student achievement in reading proficiency.

## Wings for Kids



WINGS is an after school program that teaches low-income, at-risk youth skills in behavior, decision-making, and building healthy relationships. WINGS does this by weaving a comprehensive social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum into a fresh and fun after school program. Kids get the life lessons they need to succeed and to be happy, and they get a safe place to call home after school.

WINGS is the only U.S. organization focused solely on developing and improving social and emotional skills within after school programming. AmeriCorps members carry out the WINGS program which happens directly after school, 3-hours per day, 5-days per week, for the entire school year. Students enrolled in WINGS receive more than 500 hours of programming annually. The WINGS curriculum instills 30 learning objectives intentionally embedded into every activity to develop self-awareness, relationship skills, social awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making. A typically day in WINGS consists of:

- Community Unity – the first 30 minutes of each day are focused on creating a caring community
- Choice Time Activities –blocks of art, music, sports, and innovative activities that are selected by the students
- Academic Centers –academic support and tutoring time
- Discussions and Assessments – age appropriate discussions that build social and emotional skills
- WINGSWorks –service learning activities focused on developing a sense of service and community involvement
- WildWINGS –Activities that include innovative games, discussions, academic enrichment, and role-playing to reinforce the weekly learning objective.

In 2010-11, WINGS partnered with a University of Virginia (UVA) research team for a preliminary outcome study. The results found executive function skills in WINGS kids improved by 21 percentile points and applied problem solving skills improved by 8 percentile points. Increases in these areas are strong predictors for positive long-term outcomes, improved high school graduation rates, higher income potential and reduced rates of criminal behavior. Prior evaluations by Yale University demonstrated WINGS kids attained higher math and reading scores, better grades, behavior, and school attendance than non-WINGS kids.

**Issue Area: Out of School Programs; Youth Development**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

**Innovative Elements**

- Replicable across the state
- SEL Curriculum and a variety of activities
- Partnerships with community businesses and members

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## ***Program Innovations***

WINGS provides a lasting impact on the kids who go through the program, the AmeriCorps members who serve within it, and the communities in which the program is located. WINGS kids receive more than 500 hours of high quality programming, which translates into positive behavior, academic, and attendance outcomes at school. WINGS' members develop many positive skills, such as serving with at-risk populations, their own social and emotional development, and communication and leadership skills. Many of WINGS members return for more than one year of service with the organization, and upon completion of their service, many go into education and youth development fields.

Additional elements to the program model include engaging and developing partnerships with local businesses and other nonprofits and providing a great place for volunteers. Over the past year, WINGS engaged more than 20 local partners to provide specialized programming to their students. Local businesses, entrepreneurs, and community based organizations provided their expertise to engage students during the Choice Time component of the program.

### Potential for replication

WINGS started in Charleston, South Carolina, but the 2012-13 school year brought an out-of-state replication to Atlanta, Georgia. WINGS tested out-of-state replication with only two schools and 160 kids, but the programs were so successful that they are continuing to build momentum with additional programs. Just this year, WINGS opened up a rural replication site in Lake City, SC, and there are plans to open two new programs in North Carolina during the 2014-15 school year. This replication has been buoyed by WINGS' status as a National Direct AmeriCorps program.

### ***Secrets to Success***

The WINGS model is rooted in its research-based social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. SEL curriculums improve academic performance, behavior, and attendance in students, all of which lead to increased graduation rates. The secret to WINGS' success is in the AmeriCorps members who serve with students every day. Members are carefully recruited and screened to ensure they are able to meet the rigors of serving within WINGS. Once selected, members go through a 40 hour training program to provide them with the needed tools to be successful with the WINGS students. During the course of their service, members are coached and supervised by Site Supervisors who have already served within WINGS. The prior WINGS experience that the Site Supervisors have allows them to step into the shoes of the Members in order to see what they are going through. The aforementioned supports leads to a strong community among members, where they fully believe in the mission of WINGS. Through this belief and commitment to WINGS, members fully invest themselves in the program, which leads to strong outcomes.

## Environmental Stewardship



Providing environmental education and creating volunteer opportunities that help conserve the environment are just a few ways these AmeriCorps programs involve residents in improving the environment in their communities. AmeriCorps Cape Cod members (pictured above) use public events and projects such as trail maintenance to educate and involve those within the community. Detroit's Youth Energy Squad utilizes innovative methods to promote environmental sustainability in efforts to inform and motivate residents about their environment and what can be done to revamp it.



## AmeriCorps Cape Cod



AmeriCorps Cape Cod is a full-time residential service program committed to serving the critical environmental and community needs of Cape Cod. The program has four key focus areas: natural resource management, disaster preparedness and response, environmental education, and volunteer engagement. Every year, 32 service-minded adults dedicate 11 months of their lives to participate in hands-on projects with Cape Cod towns, Barnstable County departments, the Cape Cod National Seashore, the American Red Cross, land trusts, and other

environmental, educational, and disaster related organizations in the region. Members serve together on projects like shellfish propagation, habitat restoration, trail maintenance, and fire fuel reduction. In doing so, AmeriCorps Cape Cod members build leadership skills while exploring various sectors of the environmental and disaster preparedness field.

### *Program Innovations*

The variety of service experiences that Corps members are challenged to tackle over the course of their member year makes AmeriCorps Cape Cod a once in a lifetime experience. In a typical year, corps members will respond to dolphin mass strandings, learn to use a chainsaw, receive training and support to write a grant proposal, deliver a presentation about AmeriCorps to community members, become a certified wild land firefighter, plan a volunteer event, be deployed to regional shelters during a disaster, perform a puppet show, grow shellfish, blaze a trail, develop an environmental education curriculum for a conservation agency, and the list goes on. As members respond to a wide variety of environmental and disaster-preparedness needs in the community, members gain hands-on experience and leadership skills, are forced to tackle personal weaknesses, and are encouraged to rely on other members of their team.

AmeriCorps Cape Cod is one of three environmental programs and the only program to specifically address disaster preparedness in Massachusetts. The program is the sole AmeriCorps program serving southeastern Massachusetts and the Cape. Over the past 15 years, AmeriCorps Cape Cod has completed 2,650 land and water based conservation projects, taught 2,113 environmental education activities to 50,565 students, staffed each of the Cape's 6 opened regional shelters during 2013's Superstorm Sandy, and engaged 9,524 community volunteers in over 31,656 hours of community service.

**Issue Areas:** Environmental Stewardship; Education

**Designation:** Disaster Services; Rural Impact

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Long-term alumni involvement
- Housing facilities enable 24/7 response to any environmental issue in the community

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Residential housing is provided for each of Barnstable County AmeriCorps Cape Cod's 32 members in three houses donated by Barnstable County and the Cape Cod National Seashore. Cape Cod has a prohibitively expensive rental housing market making this aspect of the program invaluable to the success of the members – many of whom move across the county to join the program. The provided housing allows members to focus on service as housemates and address Cape Cod's critical needs through innovative service solutions. The residences immerse members in the AmeriCorps brand and AmeriCorps Cape Cod's 15-year program history through house journals, alumni legacy, Corps house photos and histories, creating connections and inspiring a stronger ethic of service. The AmeriCorp Cape Cod residential program design also provides the community with a trained Corps, poised and ready to respond to disasters, to staff emergency shelters, and to respond to marine mammal strandings 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



### *Secrets to Success*

Residential, Community Strengthening, and Service are three specific areas that exhibit the success of the AmeriCorps Cape Cod's program. The residential component allows members recruited from across the country to become deeply embedded and engaged in the Cape Cod community during their 11-month term of service. Since 1999, AmeriCorps Cape Cod has graduated 97% of its over 350 alumni; of those alumni, 104 corps members have stayed or returned to the Cape to live and work after graduating from the program. For Cape Cod, this influx of young, community-minded folks is a boon. In exposing members to a wide variety of service opportunities and alumni events throughout the service year, program staff introduce members to dozens of future prospective employers, many of whom are AmeriCorps alumni. Having close to a third of alumni staying on to live and work in Cape Cod after their term of service is an indicator of AmeriCorps Cape Cod's ability to connect members to job opportunities in the region, to connect current members to the AmeriCorps alumni network, and to create a sense of community so complete that members consider Cape Cod home after just one year.

As new members arrive to their program-provided homes, it is imperative that program staff understand the quirks and challenges of program resources. AmeriCorps Cape Cod is a strong program because the program boasts a staff of 6 persons, 5 of whom are alumni of the program. As alumni move away from the program, they continue to assist the program by connecting program graduates to employment, by serving on the program advisory board, and by serving as stellar service partners.

## Detroit Youth Energy Squad



WARM Training Center's Detroit Youth Energy Squad AmeriCorps Program (D-YES) empowers young people and volunteers to make homes, schools, and neighborhoods more sustainable. Since its founding, D-YES AmeriCorps members have provided intensive environmental leadership training for more than 250 high school students, and engaged an additional 535 K-8 students in hands-on energy-saving projects. Crews of youth and AmeriCorps members have provided energy education and basic weatherization to more than 3,000 low-income Detroit households, generating over \$750,000, and 4,200 metric tons of carbon dioxide in the process.

Each home visit lasts about two hours and is conducted by teams of AmeriCorps leaders and student crew members. After 80 hours of training and apprenticeship, crews provide an introduction to the program, walk-through assessment of problem areas and savings opportunities, installations of up to 30 energy-saving supplies, and review of the energy bill.

Since its creation in 2010, D-YES has expanded its focus to include a comprehensive "green schools" program. D-YES has formed a district-wide partnership with Detroit Public Schools to design and operate the Go Green Challenge (GGC), which aims to improve student academic achievement, reduce utility costs, and benefit parents and community members. The partnership includes weekly coordination with the DPS Energy Manager and directors of the Offices of Science, Nutrition, and Operations. The GGC is implemented by 18 full-time AmeriCorps members, who serve in pairs and are supporting 63 DPS schools in 2013 (eight schools per pair). In 2012-13, 34 green teams completed 127 projects and saved DPS \$395,000 in utility costs, well above the \$150,000 target. The hands-on experience that students gain is reinforced by in-class workshops about three sustainability themes; Energy and water, recycling and solid waste, and food systems and nutrition.

Members facilitated more than 750 workshops that engaged over 3,000 students in sustainability education that improved academic performance, especially in STEM disciplines, and provides valuable life skills they can bring home. D-YES AmeriCorps members support more intensive community engagement by providing 50 free, energy-saving workshops for parents and community members. The workshops connect themes students learned in the classroom and through green team projects, to practical applications in their homes.

### Issue Area: Sustainable Living

#### Innovative Elements

- Qualitative progress survey
- Training of parents and greater community

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### *Program Innovations*

D-YES uses qualitative survey data to determine how well the energy-saving concepts of home visits are understood by households served and quantitative satisfaction ratings to evaluate our effectiveness over time. To document impact among student participants, members use intensive pre- and post-program surveys that address environmental attitudes and behaviors, college and career interests, and practice of life skills and leadership behaviors. Taken 6-9 months apart, these surveys have documented that 45% of students are more likely to pursue a green career after participating in D-YES.

D-YES has been able to exponentially expand its impact on students' environmental literacy and engagement in energy-saving behaviors and projects district-wide with Detroit Public Schools. With this partnership, the D-YES AmeriCorps program has expanded impact from 20 students in one school in 2010 to more than 500 students across 34 schools in 2012. In 2012, D-YES partnered with more than 70 community organizations to support student-led green projects. The projects included revitalizing vacant lots to creating rain water catchment systems and urban gardens. Volunteers served as trainers, guest speakers, career mentors, and project coaches and participants.

### *Secrets to Success*

Detroit Youth Energy Squad members have served in 41 Detroit Public Schools within the past year. Results of a formal analysis show that between October 1 and April 30, schools saved an average of 4.36%, totaling \$151,708 (\$3,992 per school). The savings were achieved through energy-saving projects that were developed and implemented by the members. The program's aforementioned strong partnership with Detroit Public Schools and the district's buy in to the value of the program have been the keys that have driven the program's unique success in school systems.



## Mile High Youth Corps

The Job Training and Environmental Conservation (JTEC) Initiative is a statewide collaboration among three Colorado youth corps with four service locations across Colorado: Mile High Youth Corps (MHYC), Rocky Mountain Youth Corps, and Western Colorado Conservation Corps, together serving 29 Colorado counties. These AmeriCorps members, age 17-24, are economically disadvantaged youth who have earned a high school diploma or GED, but have not yet completed a college degree. The JTEC Initiative focuses on addressing community problems, which include high school youth unemployment rates and environmental stewardship. Due to the economic recession, youth corps offers young people hope for a better future by providing stipends, opportunities for job training, leadership development, and case management support to improve their employability and career skills.

Each year, JTEC helps young people bridge the gap between high school and post-secondary graduation and/or the workplace by offering opportunities to earn stipends; acquire marketable job skills and work experience; become more mature and responsible through positive guidance and leadership development; receive encouragement and assistance with college exploration, admissions and financial aid applications; experience civic engagement; and become eligible for AmeriCorps education awards for post-secondary education in exchange for completing required service hours.

Additionally, with eleven national forests, four national parks, hundreds of regional and local parks, and thousands of miles of recreational trails and other open spaces—land managers need continual support to conserve these open spaces, and JTEC Corps has partnered in those efforts. This program's design has been expanded to support an even greater impact on environmental stewardship, particularly targeting the extensive environmental damage that resulted from Colorado's devastating fire season and flooding within the past year. Other service performed by trained Corps members includes invasive plant species removal, trail building, and maintenance of public lands. The U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, and numerous county and local governments contract with experienced and skilled JTEC partners to perform a myriad of environmental projects.

### *Program Innovations*

With young Americans having the highest level of unemployment and the slowest economic recovery, Youth Corps is a means of providing young people with meaningful service opportunities and skill development. Each JTEC site implements best practices of the Youth

**Issue Area:** Environmental Stewardship; Economic Opportunity

**Designation:** Rural Impact

**Innovative Elements**

- Partnership network between various Youth Corps
- Incorporation of youth development

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Development Model, which refers to the stages that all children go through to acquire the attitudes, competencies, values and special skills they need to become adults. Youth Corps incorporates the basic principles of the Youth Development Model in the program design by involving youth in decision making, developing youth leadership skills, engaging youth in community life, developing and testing new knowledge and practical skills, allowing youth to experience success; encouraging a sense of belonging or connectedness; and empowering youth to make a difference in their communities.

The JTEC initiative has systems in place to document the impact it makes on its members, and thus the communities served. The program recruits more than 60% of its members from the communities it serves, providing a meaningful experience to gain the employment and life skills necessary to either further their education or enter the job market with more experience, confidence, and ultimately employability.

### Exceptional Partnerships

The JTEC initiative strives to create positive partnerships with a variety of sectors throughout the state, and implements their own days of service, in addition to national and statewide days of service supported by Serve Colorado. Examples of innovative partnerships include:

- Sand Creek Greenway (SCRGP): MHYC partnered with the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership (SCRGP) to remove invasive Russian olive trees and tamarisk.
- Denver Mountain Parks and the CCC connection: Serving in the shadow of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), MHYC honored the 80th anniversary of the CCC, the popular Great Depression-era jobs initiative, by completing a variety of restoration projects at Red Rocks Park.
- Service Projects in the community: MHYC provided members with an opportunity to serve in their community beyond their normal service through monthly All Corps service projects.
- Make a Difference Day: An annual agency-wide service day on the last Saturday of October. Staff, Corps Members, families and external volunteers are invited to join MHYC in giving back to a community organization in need that day.

### *Secrets to Success*

JTEC provides weekly career and college readiness training and placement. The focus is on leadership development, civic engagement, independent living, career development, healthy lifestyles, and environmental education. In order to foster a strong core identity and spirit of service, JTEC implements “big picture” training activities each week, designed to promote and strengthen the Corps members’ connection to their communities, the service they are performing, and their service in AmeriCorps. JTEC also employs an extensive service-learning curriculum, providing members with a history of the project they address in their service and an opportunity for reflection. These strategies have led to significant improvements in Corps member retention and buy-in, to policy and procedure over the last several years.

## Healthy Futures



Serving rural and urban communities by promoting healthy activities and nutrition by incorporating assistance, prevention and intervention are key priorities for these AmeriCorps programs. Food on the Move members (pictured above) provide daily physical and nutritional assistance to low-income Texas youth. Programs also serve, educate and promote healthy life style choices to community members of all ages.

## Community Cares



AmeriCorps Community Cares is an AmeriCorps State program, of Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation (TCAC). Community Cares receives generous support from Volunteer Tennessee, public housing authorities, nonprofits and faith-based agencies to provide home and other supportive services to low-income frail elderly, challenged and disabled citizens in seventeen counties. Members assist frail seniors and persons with disabilities by direct, in-home

assistance so that the residents can remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. In 2004, Community Cares was nationally recognized by Innovations in Civic Participation, AARP and the Office on Aging, as a model senior care program. Yearly, AmeriCorps members are placed at service locations and assist 26,000 clients with a wide array of supportive services that include home and health, transportation, cognitive activities, environmental education and disaster relief.

As of September 30, 2013, less than 1% (17 seniors) of the 109,415 seniors served entered a nursing home, and were not able to remain living independently. As of September 30, 2013, Community Cares identified 39,204 economically disadvantaged, 3,576 medically underserved and 9,126 uninsured seniors. All AmeriCorps members are required to become certified in an American Red Cross cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid training course. Most of the AmeriCorps members re-enroll for an additional term of service with the Community Cares program. The Community Cares retention rate is 97.7%.

### *Program Innovations*

The Community Cares program has partnerships with the AmeriCorps Making Veterans Priority program. Two senior expos were held for 800 senior clients and 14 new resources were developed to aid seniors with home and health needs. One Community Cares member participated in the Point in Time count in Jefferson City, Tennessee, and she was able to assist homeless individuals with shelter and food. Another Community Cares member won \$10,000 dollars in the Weekend USA Make a Difference Day contest to use at her service location. She also had two Peace Corps members, who had been following the impact of the AmeriCorps program at the site location via social media; stop by to donate \$500 to the site program. The funds will go to support the Teens Need Training program. Several members reported identifying seniors who had no family members, were in their 90's and were receiving no outside services. These seniors were added to the program and set up on meal delivery, transportation and home service.

### Issue Area: Senior Citizen Living

Designation: Rural Impact; Disaster Services; Veterans & Military Families

### Innovative Elements

- Past Corps member retention
- Partnership with other AmeriCorps programs

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## Secrets to Success

The secret to the success of Community Cares stems from the fact that 4 of 7 staff members are former AmeriCorps members. Their past AmeriCorps experience gives them the drive and passion to really commit to what they do at Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation. They know very well what members deal with on a daily basis and are there for their members, their service sites and those they serve.

*“Because of new information that I received at the AmeriCorps training from the Tennessee Coalition to End Homelessness, I was able to direct some homeless and their families to this agency for assistance. Also, because of the new information we have had, we have been able to direct several veterans and their families to Tennessee Valley Coalition to End Homelessness (TVCEH) to help them with their electric bills and rental assistance.”*

*-Karrie Foust, Community Cares Member*





## Food on the Move

Food on the Move is a mobile feeding program that combats childhood hunger by providing a half million meals to children, targeting youth at low-income apartment sites. Through this program they deliver daily food to over 15,000 children who are not enrolled or involved in any organized summer program. CitySquare's Food on the Move program began four years ago in collaboration with local apartment communities,

AmeriCorps, Texas Department of Agriculture and PepsiCo. Throughout the summer months, Food on the Move operates thirty mobile teams across Dallas, Houston and Austin, with each team rotating among seven sites daily.

Meeting the truck at each site is a mobile team of CitySquare AmeriCorps members. Teams arrive on site fifteen minutes before the mobile food truck to prepare the site and to gather the children. Once the truck arrives, AmeriCorps members assist with food distribution, and as children finish eating, engage them in a minimum of sixty minutes of recreational activity based on the PlayWorks model. For nearly 25 years, Dallas-based nonprofit CitySquare has worked to address the root causes of poverty by providing hunger relief, health services, access to affordable housing, and workforce training and education to those in need. Four years ago, CitySquare launched Food on the Move to specifically combat childhood hunger when school is out of session.

### *Program Innovations*

Food on the Move not only provides thousands of children a regular meal every day during the summer months, but also provides nearly 100 service opportunities to college students and community members to make a significant impact in their neighborhood through AmeriCorps. Approximately 15% of AmeriCorps members return every summer to serve in Food on the Move. The member experience is overwhelmingly hard at times, battling 100 degree weather and often engaging hundreds of children at one site, but program alumni return to serve again because the experience allows them to make lifelong connections with families and build genuine community in the neighborhoods they serve.

Additionally, youth are engaged in physical activity every day using the model for play developed by PlayWorks, a national organization dedicated to inclusive and meaningful play. Over 1,000 youth receive the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award every summer for completing sixty minutes of physical activity every day for at least six weeks over the summer months. While the meals distributed are critical to each child's well-being, the interaction and personal

**Issue Areas: Childhood Hunger, Active Lifestyle**

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Utilize PlayWorks to engage children after mealtime
- Various cross-sector partnerships in each community

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attention they receive from on the ground teams makes a long-lasting impact. Of the children served, 88% feel more food secure while 94% feel healthier and more active.

### Exceptional partnerships

CitySquare's Food on the Move program combats childhood hunger by deploying AmeriCorps members into low-income apartment communities to provide youth with a nutritious meal. These meals are made possible by strategic and innovative partnerships with local apartment communities, PepsiCo, Texas Department of Agriculture, and AmeriCorps. Aided by the logistic capacity of PepsiCo, this innovative mobile-feeding program overcomes the barriers of transportation by delivering food daily to more than 15,000 youth in low-income areas that are home-bound and without access to nutritious meals while parents are working. Throughout the summer, CitySquare operates 20 mobile teams, bringing more than 500,000 meals and enrichment activities to apartment sites, city parks and street corners.

### *Secrets to Success*

The program's successes were recently recognized by OneStar Foundation and the Texas Governor's Office as a 2013 recipient of a Governor's Volunteer Award for Community Leadership. In 2012, Food on the Move was also named a Merit Finalist for the Mutual of America Community Partnership Award, a prestigious national award given to outstanding nonprofit organizations in the United States that have shown exemplary leadership by facilitating partnerships with public, private or social sector leaders who are working together as equal partners, not as donors and recipients, to build a cohesive community that serves as a model for collaborating with others for the greater good.

*"CitySquare's Food on the Move program has proven to be a national best practice for delivering meals to previously un-reached children. The result has been a balance of addressing immediate nutritional needs while equipping the children to lead healthy lives. Maybe most importantly, CitySquare is providing hundreds of jobs through AmeriCorps for young leaders (often from the neighborhoods they serve) to be role models, showing that it is possible to break the cycle of poverty."*

*- Matthew Smith, Manager, Food for Good at PepsiCo*

There are two key secrets to the success of Food on the Move. First, is the passion and dedication of the AmeriCorps members. Partners who have been served by other sponsors in the past say it is the AmeriCorps members that keep the kids showing up every day. Members bring with them a spirit of service and a commitment to make a positive change in their community. Second, CitySquare has been successful because of the organization's unique ability to sincerely and effectively collaborate with distinct,

cross-sector partners in each of the communities it serves. The program collaborates not just with project-specific partners, but is a leader in the North Texas community in collaborating across national service programs, working closely with the North Texas AmeriCorps Alums chapter and area AmeriCorps programs to form the first ever North Texas AmeriCorps Alliance to keep its members engaged in lifelong service and the "big picture" of solving community problems across issue areas.



## Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation AmeriCorps Program

The AmeriCorps State program at the Parasol-Tahoe Community Foundation is currently in its 14th year and has 16 members serving for the 2013-14 year. The 16 members focus on building the Incline-Tahoe

community, a community that shows the extreme ends of the socio-economic spectrum. Some of the different activities include: mentoring children in after-school programs to promote grade-level literacy and homework completion; creating programs for teens to encourage greater volunteerism and participation in the community, as well as, encouraging teens to focus on careers and entry into college. Throughout the program year, members receive training in a variety of topics that prepare them for successful careers beyond AmeriCorps. Corps Members have:

- Collected and distributed over 69,940 pounds of food to 8,550 unduplicated residents;
- Conducted American Red Cross trainings for 1201 children, and certified 86 community residents in disaster preparedness and First Aid and CPR;
- Presented over 101 healthy nutrition programs, reaching 2739 people;
- Hosted over 202 environmental education presentations for over 19,776 residents;
- Facilitated 10 support groups for 75 child victims and witnesses of domestic assault;
- Completed 30 Lake Tahoe water quality tests;
- Recruited 18 teens to serve on the first-ever Youth Advisory Council;
- Presented on domestic violence for 227 community residents;
- Lead programs for 2173 seniors;
- Provided 14 trainings to local organizations on the topics of non-profit management, financial management, human resources, and social media;
- Recruited 2,088 community volunteers who served 19,114 hours; AmeriCorps members themselves served 29,269 volunteer hours

**Issue Areas:** Healthy Futures;  
Education; Environmental  
Stewardship

**Designation:** Rural Impact;  
Disaster Services

**Innovative Elements**

- Competitive host site selection process
- Non-Profit capacity building

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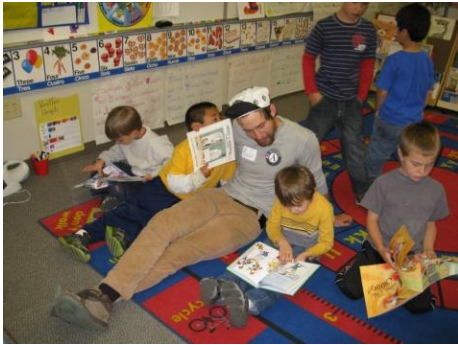
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### *Program Innovations*

The PTCF AmeriCorps model is built around identified community needs; a competitive host site selection process and the building of strong partnerships with those host sites and the community. The diversity of need and small community lends itself to an intermediary model—with members often serving in very distinct capacities. It can be a challenging model to manage,

but PTCF does it with significant partnership with host sites supervisors, leadership and the members themselves.



A unique aspect to some of the host site partnerships comes from the PTCF focus on nonprofit capacity building. One part of that model is the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation partnership with the Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation, which created the Donald W. Reynolds Non-profit Center (DWR). DWR is designed and purpose-built to house and support a variety of non-profit organizations, some of which are also AmeriCorps program hosts. The DWR Community Non-Profit Center has become home to sixteen resident organizations, (6 of

which were AmeriCorps Host sites in 2012-13), and provides centralized services and communication channels, in addition to meeting and storage space for more than 50 additional non-profit community agencies. When one walks into the DWR center, one will see AmeriCorps members currently serving and AmeriCorps alumnus leading some of the non-profit organizations. Also, a community well versed in the importance and benefits of National Service to individuals serving, the non-profits and the community at-large.

### *Secrets to Success*

PTCF's success can be linked by the entire model being built around partnerships and team building. It is of importance to the Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation to focus on host-site partnership selection, oversight process, and member development





## PCC AmeriCorps - PCC Community Wellness Center

PCC Community Wellness is a network of 10 community health centers located on the west side of Chicago and nearby suburbs. Their mission is to improve health outcomes for medically underserved communities through the provision of high quality, affordable, and accessible primary health care and support services.

AmeriCorps members are assigned to a PCC community health center where they work closely with a team of healthcare professionals. Members serve by promoting healthy lifestyle choices to patients and the community throughout the life cycle. They provide individual patient education in the health center and in homes, and conduct community education through collaborating schools and churches. PCC AmeriCorps is active in city and regional coalitions such as the Chicago Breastfeeding Task Force, Building a Healthier Chicago, and the Coalition to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children. PCC offers a mentoring program, pairing AmeriCorps members with an appropriate profession based on their career path interests. PCC's AmeriCorps program has been supporting PCC patients and community members since 1997.

AmeriCorps participants follow a national model of service from the CNCS to move communities forward and contribute to the health and well-being of the individuals they work with. Participants learn valuable work skills and gain opportunities for extending their reach in the community through service.

The PCC AmeriCorps team aims to support healthy lifestyles throughout the lifecycle, while focusing on prevention of overweight youth and obesity. The AmeriCorps program works with the assistance of two teams, the Healthy Lifestyle team and the Breastfeeding Education team. Healthy Lifestyle members promote healthy eating habits and physical activity to children and families. PCC AmeriCorps members serve as health educators, functioning both in the clinic and the community. They impact the health and wellness of community members through health promotion, wellness activities and initiatives contributing to health improvements. Members from each team are placed at four PCC health clinics with the highest patient volume; PCC Austin, PCC Lake Street, PCC Salud, and PCC South Family Health Centers. AmeriCorps team members communicate directly with patients in PCC clinics, during home visits, and at other community venues like grocery stores and local park districts.

### *Program Innovations*

Through healthy lifestyles and breastfeeding promotion, the AmeriCorps program strives to increase patients' knowledge of health, healthy behavior, and improve breastfeeding rates among

**Issue Area: Medically Underserved; Primary Care**

**Innovative Elements**

- Incorporating other educational aspects
- Intensive Coaching Program

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new mothers. AmeriCorps health educators promote healthy lifestyles and breastfeeding to a broad number of individuals and from that group then work with individuals interested in enrolling in an Intensive Coaching Program (ICP). Within the ICP, patients work with health educators through 4 – 6 sessions in goal setting and achievement in nutrition, physical activity or breastfeeding.

PCC AmeriCorps members provide a sophisticated set of services to patients as a result of an intensive one-month training and orientation. During this time, members learn about AmeriCorps national service, community and public health, and are trained in interviewing and counseling techniques to support individuals in goal setting and behavior change. PCC staff show their investment by presenting on nutrition, childhood development, breastfeeding, and counseling techniques to the members.

### Exceptional Partnerships

PCC partners with Windy City Harvest, an urban agriculture initiative of the Chicago Botanic Garden, to offer high quality, nutritious, organically grown and affordable produce to Austin community residents and PCC patients. During the summer months, PCC AmeriCorps members coordinate all market activities including interactive nutrition displays, integrating free recipes and providing nutrition information for every produce item available. In addition, a free book mobile attracts many visitors who are able to take books home to keep for their personal libraries. AmeriCorps members coordinate a Reach Out and Read (ROR) program at six PCC sites. Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based national nonprofit organization of medical providers who promote early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud. AmeriCorps members extend the ROR program model by reading aloud to children in PCC waiting room areas and during home visits.

### *Secrets to Success*

Individuals enrolled in the Healthy Lifestyle ICPs complete pre and post assessments. Pre- and post-program assessment measures overall change and change in specific areas of knowledge and behavior related to a healthy lifestyle: nutrition, physical activity and value and control over health. The desired outcome was for 50% of participants in the Healthy Lifestyle Intensive Coaching Program to improve their healthy lifestyle knowledge and/or behavior as demonstrated through pre- and post-program assessments. In Program Year 2011-2012, the first year using the assessment, 86% of patients demonstrated one or more positive changes in health knowledge or behavior. In Program Year 2012-2013, 96% of patients demonstrated one or more positive changes. Breastfeeding initiation rates have increased approximately 13% at PCC Austin and PCC Lake Street since the integration of breastfeeding educators through the PCC AmeriCorps program. The program is supported and engrained as part of PCC culture, with many continuing to work in the fields of healthcare or service after completion of the program. PCC currently has 13 alums of the AmeriCorps program employed in positions within every level of the organization.

## Volunteer Generation Fund



The Volunteer Generation Fund was established by the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009, expanding the role of the Corporation for National and Community Service in strengthening the nation's volunteer infrastructure. The goals of Volunteer Generation Fund as described in the Serve America Act legislation are:

- To assist nonprofit, faith based, and other civic organizations by expanding and improving the capacity of such organizations to utilize such volunteers;
- Spur innovation in volunteer recruitment and management practices, with the goal of increasing the number of volunteers;
- Enable the people of the U.S. to effect change by participating in active volunteer and citizen service.

The programs listed in this category have leveraged the Volunteer Generation Fund grant to build the impact of volunteers in addressing critical community needs. These programs benefit the volunteer and the community -- helping volunteers develop and maintain skills to provide meaningful service within their community. The United Way of Tri-Valley Area (pictured above) is a "one-stop" for those seeking volunteer opportunities and those looking for ways to improve their current volunteer efforts and to find volunteers to help address local issues.



## Business Volunteers Maryland



Business Volunteers Maryland's mission is to inspire volunteerism and connect motivated people and businesses to nonprofit organizations, leading to stronger communities. As a Volunteer

Generation Fund program, Business Volunteers launched the Service Ambassador Program with three goals. To create measurable improvements in the greater Baltimore region by connecting individuals and nonprofits through a variety of programs and services; spur greater volunteer participation and leadership; and develop a more motivated and engaged volunteer corps that boosts the capacity of nonprofits to effectively serve citizens and solve social problems.

Over the past three years, Business Volunteers has delivered training, mentoring, and ongoing support that equips volunteers with tools to maximize their service impact as skilled volunteers. Training sessions have included educating service ambassadors on leadership skills, assessing community needs, securing resources for a volunteer project, project management and logistics, and learning additional ways to get involved in the community. Since 2011, Business Volunteers has trained 242 service ambassadors.

Service ambassadors lead teams of volunteers in a variety of high-impact projects, including leading a week-long Health and Resource Fair for middle school students and parents, developing a volunteer recruitment strategy for a local nature center, conducting a career preparedness workshop for GED students, and planning events at Baltimore City Public Schools. Business Volunteers has also incorporated service ambassador alumni peer-mentoring into the program, offering additional support and strategic thinking in areas such as group dynamics and nonprofit partner relationships.

### *Program Innovations*

With 242 service ambassadors trained in the last three years, volunteer leaders are becoming more connected to their communities and service. Service ambassadors are from the public and private sector; for many corporate professionals, the service ambassador training enables them to lead corporate days of service and promote volunteerism throughout their companies.

In addition to engaging new volunteer leaders as service ambassadors, Business Volunteers has leveraged a total of 2,256 new volunteers, engaging them in 228 volunteer opportunities. Business Volunteers has also developed 620 partnerships with organizations which it connects with volunteers. Even beyond service ambassadors, Business Volunteers has an incredible impact on the community. Through the coordination of 465 team volunteer projects, Business

### Issue Area: Volunteer Capacity Building

#### Innovative Elements

- Focus on cross-sector partnerships
- Results-focused volunteerism

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Volunteers has helped more than 100 nonprofits improve their facilities, clean and beautify green spaces and waterways, and delivered much needed service to the community. Business Volunteers has provided valuable resources and training opportunities to more than 4,290 business professionals and 1,925 nonprofit staff members.

Through its service ambassador program, Business Volunteers is training volunteer leaders to develop relationships with nonprofits, create volunteer projects, and manage the projects to completion. Service ambassadors are encouraged to choose projects where they can use their professional skills, offering meaningful services to nonprofits and school partners. Projects such as marketing, event-planning, budgeting, and more, offer benefits to the nonprofit where they may not have had that expertise in-house and the cost to pay for the services would be prohibitive. The program is building the capacity of individuals, nonprofits, and communities to succeed.

In 2013, the third year of the program, a formal alumni mentoring element was developed as part of the program. This mentoring has been helpful to current service ambassadors by offering moral support and strategic thinking in areas such as group dynamics and transitioning into relationships with nonprofit partners. The mentoring also helps with the success and smooth operations of the service ambassador projects.

### *Secrets to Success*

Business Volunteers Maryland has a ten year history of supporting the community via volunteer matching and management support. Unique to a Volunteer Center, Business Volunteers focuses on its connection to the for-profit sector, connecting both companies and individuals to results-focused volunteerism while fulfilling the needs of nonprofit organizations for talented, mission-driven volunteers. Through board matching, team projects, skilled volunteering, and training such as with the service ambassador program, Business Volunteers has the knowledge and experience to infuse high-impact service and volunteerism through its community.

## California Volunteers Service Enterprise Initiative



The California Volunteers Service Enterprise Initiative (CVSEI) is a social innovation program built on the Service Enterprise concept inspired by Reimagining Service. As a Volunteer Generation Fund program, the Service Enterprise Initiative serves to strengthen the capacity of California nonprofits to fundamentally leverage volunteers and their skills to address community needs while building a sustainable revenue model for Volunteer Centers. Through a comprehensive research-backed assessment, training, consulting, and certification model, nonprofits are uniquely positioned to leverage the time and talent of volunteers, expand program operations and revenues which in turn will allow the nonprofit to realize higher programmatic impact and generate greater operational effectiveness. Simultaneously, selected Volunteer Centers are equipped with the program materials and technical assistance necessary to support these nonprofit Service Enterprise transformations.

Since 2012, seven California Volunteer Centers have piloted the training and consulting curriculum and worked with more than 70 organizations to achieve the Service Enterprise certification. In 2013, the Points of Light began working with California Volunteers to scale this innovation by launching a nationwide Service Enterprise Initiative (SEI). This collaboration will result in a nationwide Service Enterprise certification. By the end of June 2014, at least 180 additional nonprofits will have participated in the initiative as a result of eight California Volunteer Centers and 12 other leading nonprofit organizations in ten other states. This includes the engagement of state commissions and local United Way and HandsOn organizations in Virginia, Illinois, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Georgia.

### *Program Innovations*

The CVSEI has had a lasting impact on nonprofit organizations in California and across the country. Service Enterprises not only lead and manage better, they are significantly more adaptable, sustainable and capable of going to scale. To be a Service Enterprise requires strong and well developed human resource management practices. Critical, pro bono research conducted by Deloitte identified eight characteristics as consistent and critical practices for nonprofit Service Enterprises, including executive buy-in and clear on-boarding and expectation setting with volunteers. The CVSEI helps nonprofits develop these characteristics and practices into their organizational structure and culture. By achieving this level of excellence and Service Enterprise certification, organizations are uniquely positioned to leverage the time and talent of volunteers, expand

**Issue Area: Non-profit Resource Management**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

**Innovative Elements**

- Partnerships with other AmeriCorps and government programs
- Intense data collection to measure better efficiency

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program operations and revenues which in turn will allow the nonprofit to realize higher programmatic impact and generate greater operational effectiveness.

The CVSEI is an especially innovative program from California Volunteers representing an exciting shift in how nonprofit organizations think about and engage their volunteers to maximize their return on volunteer investment. Data in California has shown that one of every three volunteers leave their volunteer experience within six months. This program is California Volunteers' answer to the problem nonprofits have in recruiting and keeping volunteers; by identifying the defining characteristics of the model nonprofits that recruit and retain volunteers well. Through this initiative, nonprofits will have new understanding and appreciation for the variety of opportunities to engage pro bono and skills-based volunteers in strategic operations in the organization that are both sustainable and impactful.

#### Exceptional partnerships

To deliver the Service Enterprise program, California Volunteers has partnered with regional Volunteer Centers across California to work with nonprofits in their communities. California Volunteers has partnered with the Points of Light to refine the program model to equip participating Volunteer Centers and nonprofit organizations with the tools and resources necessary to effectively do this work. Some participating organizations in the CVSEI work with nonprofits that are part of Senior Corps. HandsOn Central California, one of the pilot sites in the CVSEI, is a sponsor of four county Senior Corps RSVP programs, and additionally three of the nonprofits they work with are RSVP stations. One of those is a 'grandfathered' Service Enterprise, Saint Vincent DePaul, and is run primarily on RSVP volunteers.

#### *Secrets to Success*

It is a research-backed model that provides a strong business case for fundamentally leveraging volunteers and their skills to meet community needs. Because of the research (through TCC Group and Deloitte) the program knows that organizations that engage volunteers are equally as effective as their peers without volunteers yet, operate at almost half the average annual budget. Also, for every \$1 invested in effective volunteer engagement, nonprofits can expect up to \$6 in return through more effective program delivery (representing a 600% return on investment) and when organizations engage any number of volunteers well, they are significantly better led, managed, more adaptable, sustainable and capable of going to scale. It also is a comprehensive model that meets organizations where they are. Volunteer Centers work with nonprofits to take the diagnostic tool and receive certification as well as communicate the value of that certification to their community to help build the demand and brand awareness while other organizations receive the additional support to become transformed organizations.

## Prepare/Respond/Serve



The 501 Commons Prepare/Respond/Serve (PRS) program has been supported by the Volunteer Generation Fund through the Washington Commission for National and Community Service for the last three years. The program was originally developed by 501 Commons to assist nonprofits in creating robust

emergency plans using skilled volunteers, in particular those who are veterans. The Volunteer Generation Fund sub-grant to 501 Commons has enabled the Prepare/Respond/Serve program to expand to low-income housing properties. 501 Commons is the management support organization for nonprofits in Washington State. The Prepare/Respond/Serve program helps community organizations, especially those serving vulnerable populations, respond to emergencies and recover quickly.

The Prepare/Respond/Serve program also helps develop emergency preparedness plans for the staff and residents of low-income housing properties. 501 Commons engages skills-based volunteers to develop response plans and helps residents among vulnerable populations prepare for and respond to emergencies. The residential emergency preparedness plans recommend resources that property managers and residents should have on hand before an emergency. The plans also identify emergency resources that are available in the community and neighborhood. The Prepare/Respond/Serve program requires a skill set that particularly attracts veterans and active duty volunteers. Volunteer Centers have also assisted in recruiting skills-based, veteran, active duty, and bilingual volunteers. With each project, a stronger base of support is built for broad adoption of this very cost effective model for emergency planning.

### *Program Innovations*

The Prepare/Respond/Serve program allows nonprofits to determine their mission in an emergency, to help their staffs prepare so that they can be available to assist the organization—or help low-income residents prepare so they are better able to help themselves and their neighbors. The PRS program helps to improve the security of the physical environment and to prepare emergency provisions. Emergency preparedness plans at low-income housing properties help residents prepare for emergencies by increasing their knowledge about emergency supplies they have on hand, as well as about the resources that will be available during emergencies in their neighborhood.

**Issue Areas:** Non-profit  
Emergency Response; Low-  
Income Housing Areas

**Designation:** Disaster Services;  
Veterans & Military Families

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Flexibility to fit specific situations
- Potential for replication
- Attracting veterans for service

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Because both the agency and the residential Prepare/Respond/Serve emergency preparedness plan templates can be readily tailored to fit the characteristics of the property, its staff, and its residents, there is great potential for replication by other states' Executive Service Corps volunteers.

Another element of the Prepare/Respond/Serve program that facilitates replication is the availability and willingness of 501 Commons service corps members who previously prepared plans to orient and provide lessons-learned to service corps members who are new to the program. For example, to start the process of emergency planning information exchange, 501 Commons organized a teleconference among a group of "alumni" who had created similar plans the previous year.

The Prepare/Respond/Serve program uses two customized planning tools along with volunteers who serve as planning consultants to help low-income housing facilities develop an emergency preparedness plan. The two planning tools are the PRS Assessment<sup>©</sup>, a pre- and post-questionnaire that allows the organization to measure their levels of preparedness, and the PRS Guide<sup>©</sup>, which provides a planning template with easily understood information. The PRS Guide<sup>©</sup> has also been customized for use by low-income housing providers. The program can be replicated by other states, particularly in cooperation with the 26 Executive Service Corps programs around the United States.

### *Secrets to Success*

To staff Prepare/Respond/Serve program assignments, 501 Commons draws from its pool of over 450 volunteers to access those who are available and willing to apply their skills to the PRS program. In particular, those who are veterans have skills, knowledge, and competencies that are readily transferrable to the PRS program. Veterans bring a unique sense of leadership and teamwork, which are key attributes for a consultant working in close collaboration with a wide diversity of client personnel, as well as residents of low-income properties. 501 Commons consultants who are veterans understand the commitment to achieving organizational goals and objectives and have demonstrated the ability to work efficiently and effectively within multi-cultural environments.



## United Way of Tri-Valley Area Volunteer Center

In 2010 the Maine Commission for Community Service received a Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF) grant to develop regional Volunteer Centers in the state. At that time only two volunteer centers existed and were located in the southern most counties. The Commission defined

volunteer centers as a “one-stop” for individuals or groups seeking to connect with volunteer programs; managers of volunteer programs seeking to be more effective; and community leaders seeking to identify appropriate volunteer roles in local responses to needs or issues. The United Way of Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) Volunteer Center is located in Farmington and serves Greater Franklin County. The Volunteer Center has established a strong connection with The University of Maine Farmington (UMF) that includes participating in the Partnership for Civic Advancement and engaging students who have a community service requirement or interest in giving back to the community. The Volunteer Center also works with professors and students on evaluating the impact of volunteerism in Franklin County and the Erasing the Lines program to increase employment and volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities.

Other Volunteer Center activities include the Community Energy Challenge, a volunteer-based winterization program; two mentoring programs – Lunch Buddies and Girls Talk/Teen Voices; Days of Caring; and Franklin Volunteer Network, a peer network for managers of volunteers.

### *Program Innovations*

The Community Energy Challenge (CEC) was established in 2009 as part of a county-wide initiative to help people in Maine stay safe and warm in their homes. When CEC started, a single volunteer coordinated all the activities, recruiting, training, and coordinating other volunteers. Today, with support from the Volunteer Center, the CEC is coordinated by a team of four volunteers. Last year, those four volunteers served 1,360 hours and drove more than 5,198 miles to train and coordinate efforts of 89 volunteers who contributed a total of 866 hours.

The Volunteer Center also conducts programs in two local school districts. Lunch Buddies, one program that is held at local schools, matches at-risk K-3 students with adult mentors who meet once a week during lunch and recess. The Volunteer Center has doubled the number of adult Buddies during the past year. Girl Talk/Teen voices is a mentoring program which pairs girls in

**Issue Area: Volunteer Generation and Connection**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Partnerships with various programs and schools
- Connects volunteers to opportunities
- Actively generates ideas for new volunteer programs

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grades 5-8 with female mentors who are either UMF students or community professionals. For a third year in a row, the Volunteer Center coordinated multiple “Days of Caring.” This past year, there were ten opportunities over the course of 17 days from June until November. Project included painting, building storm window panels, stuffing backpacks with school supplies, and a food drive/food sculpture building contest.

What began with Volunteer Center staff questioning how to engage people with disabilities in volunteer opportunities developed in to a series of activities planned and coordinated with a UMF rehabilitation service class. The initial activity was a panel discussion with people with disabilities and disability service providers who answered questions about inclusion. Next was training on best practices and resources for accommodations attended by 85 UMF students, community members, other Volunteer Center staff and AmeriCorps program staff and members. The final activity was accessibility assessments conducted by the social service students of businesses and nonprofits in Farmington. The rehabilitation services students presented their findings during the UMF Rehab Awareness Day on campus.

A common ingredient in the highly successful volunteer-lead programs at the Volunteer Center is that they all began as an idea of an individual fueled by their passion to make a difference in their community. Building on this energy and inspiration, the Volunteer Center has launched a new initiative, CommUnity Works, as an “incubator of ideas” that will assist individuals and groups in bringing their creative ideas to fruition to address local needs. The Volunteer Center’s vision for the initiative is potentially a hybrid business model that will provide jobs and continue to involve volunteers. Products developed will have a focus on increasing independence by using simple, replicable, low cost strategies to keep elders in their homes, save energy, and produce healthy, locally grown food.

### *Secrets to Success*

Volunteering has become an important part of UWTVA’s evolving story and future with unanimous support by the Board of Directors. The Volunteer Center has a strong sense of community and civic engagement is important to the health of the community. The Volunteer Center realizes “that many people really want to help themselves, each other, and become active members of society; what we really have to do is ask with high expectations of follow-through on both ends—the giving and the receiving. On every level of our society we have lost the connection to one another and UWTVA has been successful in making reconnections; as a result miracles continue to happen and anything is possible!” It is this organizational “attitude” that inspires others and is at the center of a synergy that has developed in the community



## Other Impact Areas



This section highlights programs that are addressing needs in their community including capacity building, public safety, and veterans and military families. Some programs use technology and community partnerships to bring awareness to and decrease crime while others provide services to veterans and those with disabilities so that they can live independently (such as Making Veterans Priority, pictured above).

## Volunteer Maryland



Volunteer Maryland's (VM) mission is to build stronger, healthier communities by developing volunteer programs with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and schools. In the last 20 years, 612 VM participants designed effective and sustainable volunteer management systems at rural, urban, school, faith-based, secular, and other community-based agencies.

Rather than providing direct services, VM AmeriCorps members generate volunteers for non-profits during their term of service. Additionally, AmeriCorps members provide and instill volunteer management practices and structures to maintain volunteer services after the member's term of service is complete. VM provides intensive training to AmeriCorps members and organizational staff to prepare them for this service, enabling them to support each other during the service year and sustain the efforts in the years following. For little cost to the organization, the AmeriCorps member is able to accomplish what it could not with existing staff and volunteers by building a solid, sustainable volunteer program. The AmeriCorps member provides a short-term infusion of resources and energy: building organizational capacity, generating volunteers, and creating volunteer programs that can be sustained for years.

### *Program Innovations*

This "survival" of volunteer programs beyond the AmeriCorps service is essential to VM's program design. As part of the partnership, VM provides training to site staff through 3 full-day training sessions and up to 5, 1-hour webinars. VM provides training on understanding the return on investment of effective volunteer management, the cost of a volunteer, and the benefits of utilizing volunteers well.

VM works with the Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism and other AmeriCorps programs throughout Maryland to reinforce AmeriCorps's identity and provide opportunities for AmeriCorps members to connect and collaborate. For the last 3 years, VM has hosted an annual networking event titled "Destination AmeriCorps." So far, 153 AmeriCorps members, alumni, and staff from 16 programs attended the event, which has included networking activities, workshops, and prize giveaways.

**Issue Areas: Capacity Building; Volunteer Mobilization**

**Designation: Rural Impact**

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Generation of volunteer programs and volunteers
- Cross-program connections with various non-profits in the state
- Lasting impact on non-profits and volunteers

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### *Secrets to Success*

All VM program and training activities are built around a framework of best practices called the Cycle of Volunteer Program Development. The Cycle is the model used by VM for each site and AmeriCorps member training, supervision, and evaluation. It provides a 3-phase process for volunteer program development: big picture (vision), foundation building, and implementation. Sites and members are trained in the 20 elements of the Cycle (i.e., community need, evaluation, position descriptions, recruitment, and supervision), and then they tailor their volunteer programs according to the particular needs.

Additionally, VM enables AmeriCorps members to acquire skills and become ready to serve as in the organizations they are tasked to help. VM's comprehensive training program combines experiential activities and classroom instruction. The training allows members to develop a connection to national service and volunteerism; learn and demonstrate best practices for volunteer program development; practice effective team-building and communication; and acquire and demonstrate leadership skills.



## AmeriCorps Urban Safety Project

Increasing public safety is critical to the success of both Michigan and Detroit as crime imposes enormous health and safety costs on Detroit citizens. To help address this issue, the AmeriCorps Urban Safety (AMUS) Program has

been working in combination with the CompStat Program at Wayne State University for the past three years. At the core of the program's approach to reducing crime are three initiatives: improve levels of neighborhood guardianship through the establishment of block clubs, reduce victim attractiveness and susceptibility; and the use of technology to increase education, communication and awareness of public safety issues and crime-vulnerable "hot spots."

AmeriCorps members build relationships with residents, gaining buy-in from neighborhood watch organizations, and guiding and facilitating meetings to build an organic, local infrastructure capable of sustaining crime reduction efforts once the AMUS Program moves on to other neighborhoods. AmeriCorps members work with block club participants to organize neighborhood watches; hand out informational leaflets and offer presentations to educate residents about public safety issues and practice; conduct home safety assessments and provide no-cost safety enhancements; and identify vacant and open buildings for demolition or board up. These activities are powerful not only for the sense of restored optimism that produces "target hardening" (a reduced susceptibility to crime), but also because they depend on the active participation of residents, which increases their likelihood of renewal and sustainability. The program has far exceeded its original goal of organizing 40 block clubs, organizing a total 68, which are all on the path to sustainability beyond AmeriCorps participation.

Lastly, members use technology to increase awareness of public safety issues and crime-vulnerable "hot spots," creating virtual connections between residents by teaching them to use computers and internet access, social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, text messaging), and email. Residents use these technology platforms for group communications ranging from safety alerts to welcoming new residents, organizing a community meal and orchestrating neighborhood cleanups. These strengthened social networks decrease the opportunity for criminal activity and the greater level of social unity can reduce rates of violence and property crime within a neighborhood.

### Issue Area: Public Safety

Designation: Governor and Mayor Initiative

### Innovative Elements

- Use of technology and social media
- Various partnerships in the community

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### *Program Innovations*

An experienced team of staff and AmeriCorps members have helped the program become a sustainable part of Detroit neighborhoods. At the core of the program's approach to reducing crime are three initiatives: improve levels of neighborhood guardianship; reduce victim attractiveness and susceptibility; and use of technology to increase education, communication and awareness of public safety issues. Members are "boots on the ground," equipped with the best real-time crime data available and empowered by local partners, such as police departments and community groups. By serving as liaisons between Wayne State's Center for Urban Studies, residents, community groups, and police forces, members add tremendous value that would not otherwise be present. In addition to the significant impact AMUS has already made in two Detroit neighborhoods, it is now expanding into five more areas in 2013-2014. As Michigan is unfortunately home to several of the country's most violent, unsafe cities, the Michigan Community Service Commission has been exploring opportunities to replicate this proven model in other vulnerable neighborhoods throughout the state.



### Exceptional Partnerships

Many partners contribute significantly to AMUS' achievements; first and foremost are the residents of the neighborhoods served. In addition, a growing list of partner organizations collaborates with AMUS including the Wayne State University Police Department, Detroit Police Department, Henry Ford Health Systems, Detroit Public Schools, and ClearCorps. The AmeriCorps Urban Safety (AMUS) Program has been working in combination with the CompStat Program at Wayne State University for the past three years. As a result, the program has produced a 44 percent reduction in crime in Detroit's Midtown community since 2008.

### *Secrets to Success*

Since its inception, AMUS has created 68 new block clubs and organized more than 200 blocks in total. Further demonstrating the programs profound success is the fact that more than 2,000 residents participate in their block club meetings and activities. This community buy-in and support illustrates the impact and success of the program, which has proven itself to the residents of Detroit. AMUS has gained overwhelming support from state and local municipalities and nonprofits. This includes Detroit Mayor Dave Bing and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, who partnered together to successfully apply for the first-ever AmeriCorps Governor and Mayor Initiative. The AMUS program was one of only nine Governor and Mayor Initiative programs funded in 2013-2014, highlighting the programs remarkable success and effectiveness.

## Making Veterans Priority



The Making Veterans Priority (MVP) program serves Veterans and their families struggling to cope with chronic lack of income, disabilities, trauma, and substance abuse. MVP assists with home modifications, strengthening family and social networks, while decreasing the risk of the population becoming homeless. MVP AmeriCorps members' ultimate objective is to give veterans in need the tools to rejoin their community as productive and responsible citizens.

### *Program Innovations*

The MVP program has had 1,747 volunteers and has logged 22,346 volunteer hours in 2013. The MVP program has received \$1,415,466.33 in donations in the past year. The potential for an additional veteran's program in other states is needed as there are currently 21.5 million veterans in the US according to the US Census Bureau.

One of the performance measures that the MVP program has met and exceeded are the number of unduplicated veterans receiving services and assistance, including Veterans with disabilities, Veterans who are unemployed, older Veterans, and Veterans in rural communities. MVP AmeriCorps member's target was 800 Veterans and the current number of Veterans that they have helped in their community is 6,392.

Another MVP AmeriCorps goal was to identify and provide services and assistance to 500 military families and families of Veterans. MVP has met and exceeded that goal and has helped over 2,572 families. MVP AmeriCorps set a goal to recruit 800 non-AmeriCorps volunteers during the program year for mentorships, child care, transition and special events that will provide 3,200 hours of services for Veterans and families of Veterans.

**Issue Area:** Veterans; Military Families

**Designation:** Veterans & Military Families; Rural Impact

#### **Innovative Elements**

- Lasting impact on those receiving service
- AmeriCorps members serving are veterans

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### *Secrets to Success*

There are several aspects that make the MVP program successful. The fact that the MVP program has a program director, Ella Parker, and a program assistant, Bethany Heuisler, who are veterans make this program unique. They both know the challenges that veterans face readjusting to civilian life.

Another reason that the MVP program is successful is that the AmeriCorps members are passionate about their service to veterans and their families in the community. Members have participated in job fairs for veterans, repaired homes for veterans and their families,

*“I was very fortunate to be able to participate in the Veteran Job Fair Expo January 29, 2013. It was a very humbling experience for me as I was able to meet Veterans both young and old. Just to stand in front of the men and women who made my freedom possible was very rewarding. It was an honor to be able to assist them even with something as simple as signing in.”*

*- MVP AmeriCorps member*

served food and provided clothing to veterans and their families and also have members that serve at the Tennessee Veterans Business Association.

The program director, program assistant and AmeriCorps members are proud to serve the veterans in the community who have sacrificed so much to provide freedom and liberty for US citizens. The Making Veterans Priority program is honored to serve those who deserve it the most.



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