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*presents the*

**2009**

# **Spirit of Service Awards**





# 2009 Spirit of Service Award



## Tanequa Neale AmeriCorps VISTA

*White-Williams Scholars  
Philadelphia, PA*

**T**anequa Neale serves as Alumni/Media Relations Coordinator for White-Williams Scholars (WWS) in Philadelphia, PA. The organization's mission is to inspire and support high-achieving Philadelphia public high school students of limited financial means to fulfill their potential. All students in the program maintain high grades and meet the federal free lunch income guidelines. WWS serves over 1,000 students each year by providing monthly stipends, academic enrichment and college prep support. Tanequa joined WWS in August 2008 with a dual goal of helping alumni re-connect to the organization and exploring media opportunities to increase the organization's visibility.

Tanequa works with college students in an effort to build communities of White-Williams Scholars on area campuses and

reaches out to current participants to plant the seed of the importance of giving back. Through the use of Facebook and the White Pages, she has found numerous alumni in the area and connected them back to the organization with volunteer opportunities. These alumni now help with student interviews for new programs, scholarship opportunities, tutoring, and community service projects.

As the staff liaison for the WWS Alumni Committee, Tanequa coordinates numerous activities, including the annual graduation /alumni reunion. Since she joined the organization she has coordinated two community outreach efforts—one in conjunction with other area non-profits and one as an MLK Day service project which involved alumni and current students working side-by-side. The MLK Day project she organized allowed current students to get a taste for community service and an opportunity to connect with others who have walked in their shoes. It offered alumni the opportunity to see the impact that WWS has on today's students and a chance to give back to the organization that once helped them. Her media outreach around these efforts resulted in several local stories.

Tanequa's new ideas and fresh approaches have engaged alumni, laid the foundation for building an active alumni community, and increased recognition for White-Williams Scholars.



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## Zenaida Solano AmeriCorps member

*Nye County School District  
Even Start Family Literacy Program*

Programs sponsored by the Nye County School District's Even Start Family Literacy Program serve the Hispanic population in a rural community 60 miles outside of Las Vegas. The agency believes that to help the community they must bridge existing communication and cultural gaps. The agency brought on AmeriCorps member Zenaida Solano to provide 100 clients with direct interpretation or translation services.

Zenaida grew up in a Hispanic community and wanted to use her bilingual skills to make a difference. Hundreds of people in Pahrump, NV, have benefited from her skills and commitment. In just six months, Zenadia has helped 700 clients access the services they need.

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At least five people completed the process of becoming U.S. citizens because Zenaida helped them with their paperwork. Several children were able to start kindergarten after Zenaida helped their parents get immunizations for their youngsters. She helped numerous parents deal with the school system in the areas of truancy, suspension, Individual Education Plans, parent-teacher conferences, behavior interventions, and registrations. She also helped the school district translate everything from forms that were distributed district-wide to notes from individual teachers to parents.

Zenaida has helped numerous clients receive medical services and accompanied clients to more than 100 medical appointments. In addition, she devoted her own time to become a certified tax preparer so that she could help the low-income families she serves complete tax forms.

When the economy started to affect the participants of the Even Start Program, Zenaida put together a participant directory that listed what type of work people did, which in turn helped them get jobs.

Having Zenaida as an AmeriCorps member has allowed the program's Family advocates to focus more time on meeting the educational and literacy needs of participants. Through her service, Zenaida has promoted the Nye County School District's Even Start Family Literacy Program and increased the agency's capacity.



Eddie Brown  
AmeriCorps NCCC  
*Orange County, California*

**E**ddie Brown's commitment to service started early: he watched and learned from his mother, who had learned similar lessons about serving from her own parents. This intergenerational influence resulted in Eddie serving as a tutor and teen mentor while in high school. At Boston College, he volunteered with faith-based organizations that served the homeless, as well as Read Boston, teaching second graders and developmentally challenged students to read and write. With such a demonstrated passion for civic engagement, service with AmeriCorps NCCC seemed like a natural progression for Eddie.

Based at the Denver campus, Eddie has taken on additional duties, serving as assistant team leader and media representative for his team. As assistant team leader, Eddie works to motivate

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his peers, organize team events, and manage the team when the team leader is absent. In his media rep role, he has organized several media events, resulting in welcome publicity for his team's efforts.

On his first NCCC assignment, Eddie helped people who were displaced by Hurricane Ike, which wiped out most of the Texas Gulf Coast. Conducting pre-placement interviews, he helped hundreds of families find places to live while they rebuilt their lives. He conducted more pre-placement interviews than any other NCCC member in his department.

For several months this year, Eddie and his teammates served in a low-income elementary school in Denver. He helped students in second and fifth grade improve their literacy skills as well as acting as a mentor to all the students in the school. His outstanding efforts earned him the admiration of his fellow NCCC members, who voted him Corps Member of the Round, an NCCC distinction that highlights the accomplishments of those members who exceed expectations both on the worksite and in their daily lives.

Eddie's next steps after completing his term of service will easily fulfill the portion of the AmeriCorps pledge in which members promise to "get things done, this year and beyond." He has been selected by the Jesuit Volunteer Corps to serve in a program working with homeless teens in the Pacific Northwest. He will serve as a case manager and will head up intake at a teen homeless shelter. Eddie plans to pursue a Master's degree in social work. He wants to prevent inner-city violence and homelessness, and mitigate the effects of poverty throughout the United States.



Seth Marbin  
AmeriCorps Alum  
*San Francisco, CA*

Seth Marbin embodies the words of the AmeriCorps pledge to get things done "this year and beyond." In Seth's case, "beyond" is the way in which he has expanded his role as a learning and development specialist with Google, Inc. His job at Google is to train the sales and operations group on products and skills they need to succeed in their roles at the company. But he recognized that he could also play a part in engaging the broader Google network in community service.

Seth joined Google with two terms of AmeriCorps service under his belt. He started with the Youth Volunteer Corps of Corvallis. During his second term, as a VISTA, he began setting up a literacy program at the University of Puerto Rico, work that was cut short when Hurricane Georges hit the island. He supported disaster relief efforts in a variety of roles including working with the Red Cross. He later transferred closer to home, where he served as an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow with City Year in Seattle. Seth's belief in the ideals of AmeriCorps—to give citizens the opportunity to serve to meet the critical needs in their communities—led him to work full-time with City Year and continue his commitment to community service, before joining Google.

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Upon joining Google, he wanted to help the company revitalize and deepen connections with local communities, and build a stronger sense of community among Google employees. With this vision in mind, Seth presented his idea, "GoogleServe"—a day for employees to join together to do community service—to the internal ideas board. It quickly became one of the top-rated ideas. With employee support, Seth's vision has grown and with his leadership became an international week of service in 2008.

With the support of his team of Google volunteers, and partners HandsOn Bay Area and VolunteerMatch, the first GoogleServe launched in June 2008 with 3,000 people across 45 global offices serving in their local communities. In the Bay Area, Seth visited nearly all of the 15+ volunteer events taking place, from San Francisco to Oakland to San Jose, answered questions from employees and the press and made sure that all of the 975 Google volunteers got to their project sites.

Projects ranged across the globe from beach cleaning in Haifa, Israel, to providing environmental education to youth in Wroclaw, Poland, to tree planting in East Palo Alto, CA, to bike repair classes in London, UK.

GoogleServe 2009 is expected to engage 1,700 Google employees in meaningful service throughout the Bay Area. Additionally, the International GoogleServe initiative will expand, engaging as many as 5,000 volunteers across 60 offices worldwide. What began as an idea to connect Google employees with their communities has transformed the world of corporate service. This model gives employees a voice and leverages local partnerships to transform the local community.



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## Visitacion Custodio Foster Grandparent

*Milpitas, CA*

Visitacion Custodio has been a Foster Grandparent at Cassell Elementary School with the Santa Clara County Office of Education for more than five years. Currently, she assists two developmentally disabled students with reading and writing skills. Grandma Visitacion's ability to understand each student's developmental level is an asset. She has the patience and knowledge to teach a child to read and write. The students mentored by Grandma Visitacion have learned new skills because of her undivided attention to each of them.

A caring and loving person, Visitacion interacts with the students on their own level. She knows her role in the classroom and her love for the service she provides shines through to her students. She takes time to not only talk to them, but to listen to them as well—a wonderful skill of a great mentor. Through these qualities, Grandma Visitacion has been an example to other

volunteers. She is an active member of the Advisory Council and helps in planning annual recognition events, holiday events, and monthly in-services. Not only has she provided help, love, and care to individuals with developmental disabilities, she has received the benefit of knowing that she is wanted, needed, and cared about. She has shared her experiences with others and referred new volunteers. She is a great advocate for the Foster Grandparent program.

According to Marilyn Etherington, the classroom teacher who oversees Grandma Visitacion, classroom test results have proven that the students whom Grandma Visitacion has mentored have increased at least one year in skill due to her assistance. "Grandma Visitacion is the glue that holds the class together," Ms. Etherington said. "She is a wonderful person. She is very patient and caring and knows how to get the students to work hard."

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Newt Hardie

RSVP

*Spartanburg, SC*

As an RSVP volunteer, Newt Hardie committed his efforts in 2008 toward one goal: eradicating kudzu, the invasive plant that costs about \$500 million annually in lost crops and control efforts in the southeastern United States. A retired business person and engineer, Newt is also a certified master gardener who serves as the volunteer executive director of the Kudzu Coalition. The Spartanburg-based organization has partnerships with 118 groups, ranging from neighborhood associations to federal agencies, and manages 64 kudzu control sites. At 21 of those sites, the coalition's volunteers have achieved total eradication of the pesky plant, saving hundreds of trees. The eradication activities have spread into four neighboring counties and Charlotte, NC.

The organization experiments with non-herbicidal methods to control kudzu infestations and has developed a method of killing kudzu with hot water and demonstrated the effectiveness of mowing. Newt's experiments have been cited in scientific papers, and he combines a gardener's knowledge with the management skills of a volunteer recruiter and coordinator.

Education is a key component of the work of the Kudzu Coalition. It trains students, school administrators and faculty members and the public about the problems caused by kudzu. Students from six area schools have participated in kudzu control and the coalition has distributed environmental books to local school superintendents and elementary school principals to stress the importance of nature education for young children.

The coalition's success is attributable to Newt's ability to accomplish three important tasks: recruiting and managing volunteers, eradicating kudzu, and focusing on education. By making sure volunteers enjoy themselves (they refer to themselves as "Kudzu Warriors"), Newt has developed a system that attracts and holds them. Similarly, he has put together a large coalition of diverse organizations by showing them how their interests are served by his projects. Newt has helped school children, government officials, academics, the civic minded, and gardeners all unite in a common cause that is also uniquely their own.

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### Sharon Padula Senior Companion

*Minneapolis, MN*

Sharon Padula was assigned to serve as a companion for an extremely isolated and highly anxious client through Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota and the Anoka County Community Action Program. The client also had dementia, which often made it difficult for her to remember information ranging from other people involved in her life to appointments. Since the client had no direct family involvement or other social supports, Sharon quickly became her lifeline.

Initially, the client was reluctant because she thought she would have to clean her house and prepare coffee for Sharon's visits. But Sharon stuck with her and began to develop a trusting relationship. Sharon was one of the few people this woman could rely on and was the only appointment she remembered, and eagerly anticipated, each week.

For her part, Sharon made sure the woman's needs were met and showed great empathy for her situation. She made sure the woman had her food commodities each month, had nutritious meals, took her to doctor and hair appointments, and to get groceries. Perhaps most important, she listened to her stories

and concerns even if she had heard the same information dozens of times before. It was clear that this woman had come to view Sharon as a trusted companion, one who saw her through some of the hardest and loneliest transitions of her life.

Sharon provides companionship to three clients, serving about 12 hours a week. In addition, Sharon is a volunteer leader who fulfills the important role of supporting the needs of her 17 fellow Senior Companion volunteers across Anoka County. With the support of her site supervisor, she is in charge of the waiting list for clients that are in need of a Senior Companion volunteer. She also is in charge of new client assignments for the other Companions, introductions to new clients, and communication with case managers and nurses. She approaches this role with more than 40 years of experience in the health care field, bringing great knowledge of working with elderly clients and health care professionals.

The other Senior Companions frequently seek Sharon's advice on handling difficult situations and for ideas of what to do with resistant clients. In the community, Sharon represents the program through her professional contacts with public health nurses, outreach workers, and families of clients. She also represents the program at quarterly trainings and at community functions where she recruits new volunteers to the program. She has expanded the program through the amount of time she devotes to serving as lead Senior Companion, dedicating more than 10 hours per week to a position that would otherwise have to be filled by staff. Without her support, it would not be possible to serve the number of clients or engage the number of volunteers that her program does.



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Mrs. Townsend's  
Second Grade Class  
*Pittsburg Elementary School  
Pittsburg, TX*

**M**ary Ruth Townsend's second grade class at the Pittsburg Elementary School proves that it's never too early to start learning—and serving. The class's service-learning efforts started in 2001 with a classroom project to raise money to feed chickens at a local museum. Since then, the children have focused on helping people with special needs, starting scholarship funds, and making it their personal mission to involve every child on the campus in service-learning efforts. They have raised and donated more than \$10,000 to various organizations, scholarships, and charities over the course of eight years.

Each project starts with an investigation phase. The children take a walking tour of the community, then discuss what they saw, identify community needs, and envision solutions. The class then votes to decide which needs should be tackled first. With that decision made the class forms committees to address specific tasks involved in implementing their ideas, including public relations, advertising, and budgeting committees. The children develop a variety of skills in the process, including math, writing, project planning, teamwork, and negotiating. They learn how to put ideas into action and the importance of following through to achieve goals.

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When reflecting on their activities, the students and their teacher strive to understand what they did well and what can be improved upon. They then develop a multi-media presentation to document their project, learning software programs and story structure skills. At the end of the year, during a Regional Day of Celebration, the students set up a booth and show their presentation to other schools and community leaders.

Mary Ruth is quick to express her pride in her students. "Without exception, their optimism and can-do spirit as a result of these service-learning experiences gives me great hope for the future. Rather than standing at the front of the class and trying to stuff important knowledge into their heads by just repeating, repeating, and repeating, I'm engaging them in understanding that knowledge in a practical sense through service-learning activities. And no one is too young for that."

Everywhere they speak or serve, the students inspire people to reflect on their own service to the community. The children have spoken to groups of more than 500 people about issues such as education, scholarships, and their own future in college. They also have filmed public service announcements and worked to design and produce items to sell for charitable causes.

As a result of their own service, the concept of service-learning has spread throughout their community and campus wide.

The greatest challenge the second graders have had is to get people to see beyond their age. But facing the attitude that others think they are too young has motivated them to prove themselves by serving more.



**Educator  
Dawn Davis**

*Moriarty Elementary School  
Norwich, CT*

**E**nglish Language Learner (ELL) teacher Dawn Davis uses her commitment to the environment and social justice, locally and globally, to generate the opportunity for her students to contribute to the well-being of others and to experience the impact of service.

Dawn initiated the first school-community garden in Norwich in 2007 to provide fresh vegetables to the St. Vincent DePaul's Community Kitchen and Food Pantry. It now serves as a summer school outdoor classroom for the lowest-performing middle school students in the district. With Dawn's guidance, the service-learning coordinator and summer school staff created a curriculum to teach over 20 students earth science, health, nutrition, math, critical thinking, communication, and journal reflections.

More than 150 students and community members have been involved with the 3,200 square-foot garden plot, including two high school students who completed a six-week garden internship with the service-learning coordinator. Dawn has mobilized her colleagues in the district for a number of

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initiatives including the most recent successful grant proposal to have Smartboards installed in participating classrooms for instruction centered around the student garden project.

Dawn also established *Norwich Kids Knit!* teaching students of all backgrounds how to knit in order to provide handmade hats and scarves for children at the local shelter for Christmas. Her ELL students are now teaching new club members how to knit, consolidating their new skills and building their confidence to communicate with others in the new language they are mastering.

Dawn's vision and dedication to social justice and environmental stewardship permeates every aspect of her teaching and classroom. To reach a classroom with 17 students from five different grades with four different original languages, she uses project-based learning and service as the foundation. Most importantly, she develops the sense of ownership in each child that inspires them to succeed and serve others instinctively. Most recently, Dawn has taken the first steps to creating a non-profit organization, Norwich G.RE.E.N.S. (Growing Resources for Education and Essential Needs through Service) to develop more community gardens in low-income neighborhoods and to sustain the project for years to come.

Dawn instills the spirit of service in her students at an early point in their development. While she is skilled at growing healthy vegetables, she is exceptional at growing leaders.



## Student Adam Handy

*Pike County Youth Leadership Council  
Pike County, KY*

**T**he Pike County Youth Leadership Council (PCYLC) has expanded tremendously under the leadership of Adam Handy. His three years on the council include two as president. Adam, a senior at Belfry High School in Pike County, has helped the Council grow from 14 members to 120 young people representing the county's six high schools and two school districts. He has led the group in community service that has improved the quality of life for thousands of people in the area. The Council undertakes at least two service-learning projects each month, on both the individual school and county-wide levels.

Council members serve an average of 180 hours a year volunteering. In addition, the Council has an active mentoring program, with members mentoring younger students throughout the county.

The Council has tackled a host of difficult problems, including childhood obesity, drug addiction, animal rights, and environmental issues. Adam has led the Council to support and secure public policy changes in these areas. Recognizing that Kentucky leads the United States in the number of deaths from tobacco usage, Adam and the Council successfully sought an ordinance

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from the City of Pikeville making all public areas smoke-free. The Council also successfully petitioned the Pike County Board of Education to enact drug testing for students. PCYLC has won local, state, and national awards for their service-learning advocacy work.

In addition, Adam has taken active roles in numerous other community agencies, serving on taskforces and community boards such as the Pike County Health Department Advisory Board. His work with the United Narcotics Investigation, Treatment and Education (UNITE) organization has earned him a position as director of their summer camps for the coming summer. He began his volunteer work there as a teen counselor, where he inspired many idle school students and helped them with their self-esteem and coping skills.

Adam has been instrumental in creating service-learning projects to keep the interest of the students and involve the community. He also has designed numerous ways of sustaining the Council, which no longer takes any money from the local school district. Instead, money is raised privately to support the Council's projects. PCYLC has also raised funds for other organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, Kiwanis, Rotary, and the American Cancer Society.

In motivating thousands of students and community residents to serve their schools, community, state, and country, Adam has helped the Council set high goals, and achieve them.



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2. Create an account
3. Access the toolkit

### **Stop by the Corporation booth at the CISCO Energy Exchange for Toolkit demonstrations.**

In collaboration with a consortium of national nonprofit organizations focusing on capacity building for volunteering and nonprofits convened by the Corporation for National and Community Service, this online toolkit was paid for by the President's Council on Service and Civic Engagement and developed by ABS Consulting with ETR Associates.

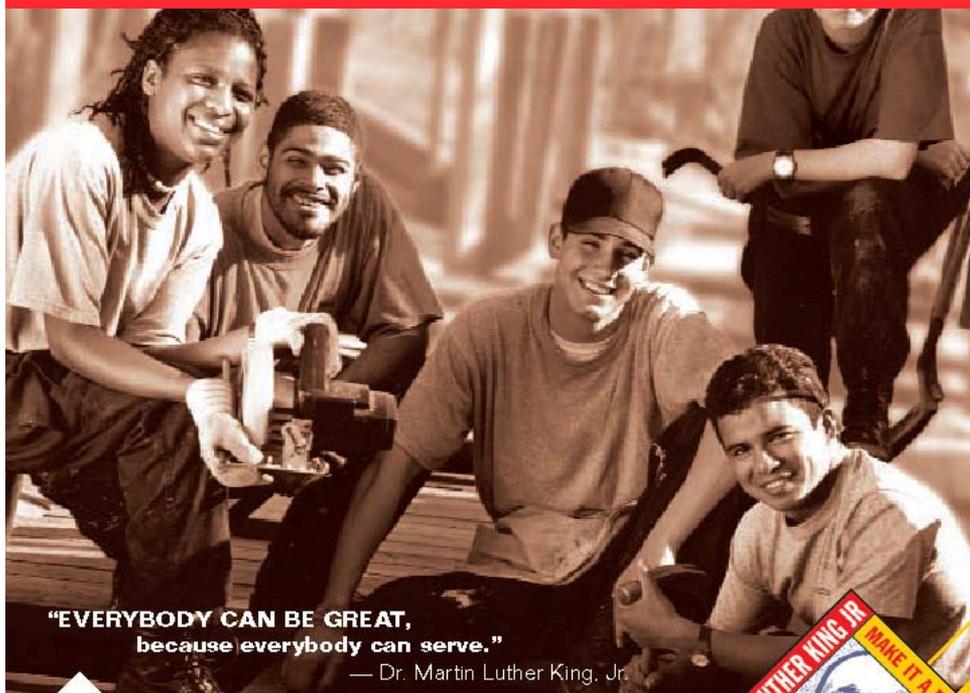
The consortium of national nonprofit organizations focusing on capacity building for volunteering and nonprofits convened by the Corporation for National and Community Service includes:

- American Red Cross
- Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE)
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- Idealist.org
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- National Council of Nonprofit Associations and Nonprofit Congress
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