



AMERICORPS 20th ANNIVERSARY

NationalService.gov/AmeriCorps20



Healthy Futures Toolkit

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AmeriCorps 20th Anniversary Key Messages

- **Service is a Solution:** More than 80,000 AmeriCorps members are improving the lives of millions of our most vulnerable citizens each year. AmeriCorps' impact is proven and measurable.
- **Health Education:** AmeriCorps members save lives and improve health through education and outreach, prevention training, and connecting families to services.
- **Changing Habits:** Too many of our nation's children and youth have unhealthy eating habits and don't get enough exercise. Our AmeriCorps members seek ways to change that.

AmeriCorps Healthy Futures Statistics

AmeriCorps programs cover a wide scope of needs and issues. For example:

- **Coach Across America**, an AmeriCorps program of Up2Us, promotes health and nutrition as part of its youth development efforts by training and hosting highly effective coaches in communities where they serve 40,000 young people annually. The result—91 percent of kids engaged through the program have developed more positive attitudes towards physical fitness and all gained a better understanding of healthy eating and the value of physical activity.
- **FoodCorps** serves more than 200 public schools, the majority of which record rates of free/reduced lunch of more than 50 percent. With an aim to reduce childhood obesity in line with the goals set by the First Lady's *Let's Move!* initiative, FoodCorps has donated more than 7,000 lbs. of garden fresh produce to food insecure community members.
- **The National Health Corps**, an AmeriCorps program of the Health Federation of Philadelphia, was originally launched under HRSA in 1994. Members recently educated 17,607 people on health topics including healthy eating, asthma management and smoking cessation.
- **Rio Grande Community Farm (RGCF)** is a 138-acre farm owned by the City of Albuquerque's Open Space Division. RGCF serves to improve the health of the community through sustainable agriculture, education, and fresh food for all. Earth 4, an AmeriCorps NCCC team from the Southwest Region, worked alongside other AmeriCorps members and the staff and volunteers at the Rio

Grande Community Farm. Together, they are growing healthy organic food that directly improves the health of school children and the community. They use growing practices that conserve and enhance soil, water and land, and train the next generation of farmers.

- **The Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute's Delta Garden Study** is a \$2 million research study funded by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service. As part of this initiative, an AmeriCorps NCCC team harvested 200 pounds of food for school cafeterias while teaching nutrition to approximately 200 middle school students. Members contributed to the construction, maintenance, and improvement of gardens to combat childhood obesity, improve academics, and reduce social risk behaviors in Arkansas.
- **The Corvallis Environmental Center (CEC)** was founded in 1994 as a community-based effort to take action on a number of environmental issues. AmeriCorps NCCC members grew and distributed more than 8,000 pounds of fresh produce to the South Corvallis Food Bank and Stone Soup kitchens. They also refurbished and built facilities at the Starker Art Gardens to enhance the non-profit's ability to use community volunteers and provide education programs.

AmeriCorps Healthy Futures Talking Points

- We provide much-needed services to underserved areas to help our citizens improve their health through a three-pronged approach of assistance, prevention, and intervention.
- AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA members are involved through the Community Health Corps, a CNCS program that places workers in health centers around the nation to improve access to primary and preventative health care.
- AmeriCorps members serve rural and urban communities. They engage youth in physical activity and teach them the importance of nutrition. They also provide in-home services to seniors to make daily tasks easier. AmeriCorps members also connect people with programs and information to help them lead healthier lives.
- Since 2000, AmeriCorps NCCC members have started or tended 4,500 community gardens.

Opportunities To Get Involved

There will be many opportunities for you to engage with us throughout the month, but here are a few days you can mark on your calendars. Be sure to use the **#AmeriCorps20** hashtag so we can hear what you're up to!

March 5, 2014: Share a blog post from CNCS CEO Wendy Spencer about AmeriCorps' role in building healthy communities.

March 3-7, 2014: Share the AmeriCorps 20 Healthy Futures badge on Facebook.

March 10-14, 2014: Tweet your support of local national service participants who contribute to healthy futures.

March 17-21, 2014: Help us highlight veterans' contributions to Healthy Futures via Twitter and Facebook.

March 24-28, 2014: Volunteer at your local community garden or health and wellness organization.

Spreading The Word On Social Media

Below are some other ways you can highlight the contributions of this program with social media content during the month of March. (We recommend using the hashtag #AmeriCorps20 to highlight your comments).

AmeriCorps Grantees

- Tweet your support on Twitter: *(Twitter handle)* is proud to be an AmeriCorps healthy futures program #AmeriCorps20
- Or tweet: We're proud to have AmeriCorps serving at *(YOUR PROGRAM/ORGANIZATION HERE)* #AmeriCorps20
- Ask the program directors and administrators you work with to consider submitting op-ed or blog items explaining how important AmeriCorps members are to their healthy future initiatives. You may also submit AmeriCorps success stories to pressoffice@cns.gov (300-500 words).

AmeriCorps Members

- Currently serving members who serve in healthy futures -- tweet about your service in AmeriCorps healthy futures programs: *I'm making a difference in healthy futures through AmeriCorps with (program name) at (organization name)* #AmeriCorps20
- Submit your personal AmeriCorps healthy futures success stories all month long to pressoffice@cns.gov (300-500 words)

AmeriCorps Alums

- Tweet about your service in AmeriCorps healthy futures programs: *I'm an @AmeriCorps alum continuing to make a difference in healthy futures with (program name) at (organization name)* #AmeriCorps20
- Submit your personal AmeriCorps healthy futures success stories all month long to pressoffice@cns.gov (300-500 words).

Sample Healthy Futures Stories

One of the best ways we can spread the word about AmeriCorps healthy futures programs is by sharing our stories on the National Service Blog. The following are examples of stories we've published about healthy futures initiatives.

[AmeriCorps VISTA Creating Oasis in Baltimore 'Food Desert'](#)

As Christina Bodison navigated a demanding course load at Howard University, the former biology major actively searched for ways to be of service to others. First, she mentored high school students during an alternative spring break program in Detroit. Then, she researched HIV, AIDS, and the socioeconomic factors that bar access to health care. All of this compelled Christina to join the AmeriCorps VISTA program and the fight against poverty.

"I was presented with so many opportunities that allowed me to see the importance of service," she said. "I learned about giving back to the community I live in."

Now Christina is urging others to do the same.

As an AmeriCorps VISTA member and volunteer coordinator for the Baltimore "Virtual Supermarket" Program, Christina is finding new ways to link residents to healthy and affordable food. Baltimoreans who live in "food deserts" can order groceries online—either from home or by visiting their local library, school, or senior/disabled housing site.

Christina manages a team of community volunteers, known as neighborhood food advocates, who help shoppers submit and pick up their orders. Through this Baltimore City Health Department initiative, she hopes to raise awareness about the link between poverty and health.

"Some people don't have a car to get to a supermarket. Or they have to catch two to three buses to get there," said Christina. "This program essentially eliminates those barriers."

In addition to her AmeriCorps VISTA and undergraduate experiences, Christina's parents solidified her interest in service. Her mother lived in Ghana, West Africa, during an appointment with the Peace Corps and her father served in the U.S. Air Force for more than two decades.

“My parents shaped my expectations of what service could be,” Christina added.

And enhancing expectations in underserved communities is the mantra she plans to follow in her next venture—medical school. The study of medicine, Christina believes, parallels the fight against poverty.

“Being able to better understand how poverty impacts the lives of individuals helps us better understand the intersection between health, nutrition, and education,” she said.

[FoodCorps: Sowing the Seeds for A Healthy Life](#)

USDA data shows that only 2% of kids eat enough fruits and vegetables and 1 in 4 young adults are too overweight to qualify for military service. Statistics like these don't exactly paint a hopeful picture for the future. But a new national service organization, FoodCorps, has set out to change that.

Dedicated to addressing our country's childhood obesity epidemic through school gardens and farm-to-school programs, FoodCorps inaugural season will deploy AmeriCorps members to sites in 10 states: Arkansas, Arizona, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Oregon.

Earlier this week the first class of 50 FoodCorps members convened in Milwaukee, WI, for an intensive week-long training that included hands-on instruction on how to build gardens and educate children about nutrition among other things.

“These young leaders are dedicating a year of their lives to help give kids a relationship with healthy food that we hope will last a lifetime,” said Curt Ellis, co-founder and executive director of FoodCorps, and co-creator of the award-winning documentary, “King Corn.”

FoodCorps members will not only be responsible for creating school gardens, but will provide nutrition and healthy food education to students. They will also work with local food service directors to source meal ingredients from local farmers, supporting local economies while encouraging environmentally friendly practices.

“FoodCorps is part of something that is large, interesting, dynamic, and important,” said AmeriCorps Director John Gomperts at the FoodCorps inaugural event on August 16.

America's children are in crisis. In the last 30 years, the number of obese children has tripled, with little sign of slowing down, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, which runs AmeriCorps, is committed to supporting efforts to reverse this crisis. By funding programs like FoodCorps and hosting initiatives like Let's Read. Let's Move, the Corporation supports smart solutions to national problems.

"As a nation, we are tightening our fiscal belt, yet health-related obesity costs are projected to reach \$344 billion by 2018. FoodCorps is a sound investment in a healthy future and gives our kids a chance to beat back the painful and costly epidemic of diet-related disease," said co-founder and FoodCorps Program Director Debra Eschmeyer, herself a produce farmer and former outreach director of the National Farm to School Network.

You can join the fight against childhood obesity by searching for related opportunities in your area on serve.gov or using a toolkit to create your own community garden or walking team or to promote back to school health.

CNCS Healthy Futures Online Resources

Let's Read. Let's Move

<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/lrlm>

Community Health Corps

<http://www.communityhealthcorps.org/>

Food Corps

<https://foodcorps.org/our-structure/our-relationship-to-ameri-corps>

AIDS United AmeriCorps

<http://www.aidsunited.org/>

Let's Move! in Indian Country

<http://www.letsmove.gov/blog/2013/05/09/celebrating-two-years-let%E2%80%99s-move-indian-country>

Coach Across America

<https://www.up2us.org/coach-across-america>

National Health Corps

<http://www.nationalhealthcorps.org/national/ameri-corps-0>