

# Narratives

## Executive Summary

Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp will have 14 AmeriCorps members who will tutor and mentor at-risk elementary students in Little Rock, Arkansas. At the end of the 1st program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for improving academics and behavior in at-risk 3rd-5th grade students. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 200 volunteers that will be engaged in mentoring and facility upkeep. This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$176,231 will be matched with \$232,843, \$180,684 in public funding and \$52,159 in private funding.

## Rationale and Approach/Program Design

PROBLEM/NEED. Brad witnessed the shooting and murder of his mother. Anna's mother went to prison for cooking meth. Kathy was sexually abused by her father for years. Alex was adopted from Russia but has significant issues with bonding. Brad, Anna, Kathy and Alex were ten years old when they entered our program. They were not drug abusers, school dropouts, gang members, teen parents or prison inmates so there are no statistics to categorize them at a young age, but someone (teacher, counselor, parent) feared that they would become statistics for all those areas and possibly death. These students and others were enrolled in the Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE), a residential educational wilderness program that targets academics and behavior. Other ACE students have issues with ADHD, divorced parents, bullying, and high absenteeism. While all of these children may experience some of the same issues, the common denominator is that they were referred to our program because they are not doing as well in school and/or at home as they are capable of doing in terms of academics and/or behavior.

The community need we will target is low academic performance and poor behavioral choices in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students in the Central Arkansas area to hopefully prevent these students from becoming the statistics described above. The 2013 Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan (ACSIP) for each school and the 2012-13 Benchmark and IOWA test information reveal a significant academic need in the Little Rock (LRSD) and Pulaski County (PCSSD) school districts. We are partnering with the 37 LRSD and 34 PCSSD Title I and/or schools with over 40% of the population receiving free or reduced lunch. Of those 71 schools, 11 are Priority Schools, 13 are Focus Schools, 44 are Needs Improvement Schools, and 28 of them have over 81% of the population receiving free or reduced lunch with 14 of those schools over 90% a staggering percentage. There are 30 schools with 40% or more students not proficient in literacy and math on the Benchmark, and the National

## Narratives

Percentile Ranking of both districts on the IOWA for both reading and math are below 50%. ACSIP plans for all of the schools identify literacy and math improvement as their primary goals. This information helps us to know which schools (high poverty and low performing) to encourage and assist with recruitment efforts. We will certainly use stronger recruitment efforts with the Priority and Focus schools, but we will also recruit from the Needs Improvement schools since our program primarily targets individual at-risk students rather than a school wide culture.

The Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment (APNA) is an annual anonymous survey for middle and high school students to assess their behavioral choices. According to the 2012 APNA, there were several areas in which 6th grade youth from Pulaski County reported significantly higher rates than the state averages in the following behavior risk factors: interaction with anti-social peers (56.9% county/38.1% state), perceived risk of drug use (49.1% county/36.9% state), early initiation of anti-social behavior (37.6% county/22.8% state) and suspended from school (25.6% county/11.2% state). Other county statistics further point to factors that frequently lead to low academics and poor behavior: Over 16% of Pulaski County residents are living in poverty; for children under the age of 18, that percentage increases to 26% and 54-56% of County students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. According to the Arkansas Economist website, current Arkansas Unemployment rates are 7.5% and are higher than the national average.

AMERICORPS MEMBERS AS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE MEANS TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS. AmeriCorps Members (ACMs) will solve the community problem of low academic performance and poor behavioral choices of at-risk students. Specific activities and roles of the members in both the Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE) and summer camp programs are discussed below and in the LOGIC MODEL. All of these activities carried out by ACMs are designed to address the need for academic and behavioral success in at-risk students.

Academic Instruction: Classroom instruction is in a one-room schoolhouse setting with 82 acres of woods, streams, and mountains in which experiential learning programs are implemented. The camp employs two teachers and utilizes AmeriCorps members (ACMs) to provide a 1:8 adult/student ratio with up to 40 students in the classroom per session. The teachers receive individual academic information from school personnel on each child. Students are tested during the first two days of ACE using the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and teacher-made tests to determine ability levels. Students are then placed into appropriate ability-level groups for reading and math instruction. ACE teachers and ACMs use the Reciprocal Teaching reading and tutoring strategy, which allows students to take turns as the teacher, asking ¿teacher-like¿ questions and using five steps for reading

## Narratives

comprehension. Unlike most residential therapeutic and/or treatment programs, the primary focus of ACE is academics. Students spend more time on academics at camp than in the regular classroom, and once a week students return to the classroom at night for ¿night school¿ to address academic areas of concern. We believe that students will not feel successful in school until they possess the academic skills to achieve regardless of the amount of time spent on social development.

**Insisted Success:** Closely aligned with academics is the component we call insisted success in which students must complete and score at least 80% on all academic work. Any substandard work must be repeated until 100% mastery is attained. Some students struggle with this component, shedding several tears in the process. Yet, those are the same students who are overwhelmed with pride and gratitude once mastery is attained.

**Residential Programming:** The residential aspect of the program makes the concept of insisted success easier to enforce at camp as opposed to the regular classroom. Students do not go home at night where oftentimes they will tell parents that they did not have homework. At camp all ACMs are aware of the academic work to be accomplished and all are committed to ensuring that students complete their work. Residential programming also challenges students to learn independence and to recognize that the habits used at home and regular school do not always work well at ACE. Therefore, the students must adapt to the setting. For some students the change of environment can be overwhelming and relieving. As one camper wrote, "Pfeifer Camp is a great place to be. You don't have to worry about getting shot, being robbed, or hearing traffic all night. You can leave all your worries at the gate." Two ACMs live in each cabin with ten campers to provide a 1:5 adult/student ratio. ACMs are responsible for the students each day from 3:30 pm until 8:30 am the following morning.

**Parenting Meetings:** Becoming involved in the program is voluntary. But once they have committed, parents must attend weekly parent meetings/workshops for their children to stay involved. These workshops focus on communication skills, problem solving strategies, parent advocacy, and teacher-parent relationships. Each parent meeting begins with a group meeting involving all ACMs, parents and students in each cabin group to discuss events and issues from the previous week at camp and from the weekend at home. ACMs, parents, and students also discuss goals for the week ahead. The parent meetings help everyone start the week on the ¿same page.¿ Through these meetings parents remember that their primary job is to nurture and discipline their children, provide appropriate boundaries, and be their child¿s advocate.

**Cabin Social Skills:** The students and ACMs live in rock and log cabins with wood burning

## Narratives

fireplaces. The students talk about their cabins as "families" and speak of the love that they experience while in our program. While living as a family, the students learn important social skills including personal hygiene, camp chores, awareness of self and others, independence, goal setting and development, and appropriate peer and adult relationships. Since ACMs live with the students, they are always available and looking for teachable moments to share with the students. The social skills that students learn can be as basic as learning that it is important to brush your teeth to more advanced and sensitive areas such as understanding verbal and nonverbal communication differences between cultures.

**Cooperative Games and Team Building Initiatives:** Most youth are well versed in team sports such as basketball and football. These activities are de-emphasized at camp in favor of recreational activities that require and encourage whole group participation regardless of physical ability. Team building initiatives led by ACMs are fun activities that generally cannot be accomplished without the support of all of the team members. By nature these activities can be quite challenging and are intentionally designed to be problematic for the team. Through the team's struggle to accomplish the goal and subsequent processing of the roles and actions of team members, students can take the lessons learned and apply them to the next challenge whether it is an initiative or a real-life situation. Experiential learning allows the students to fail with dignity and repeat the task with success.

**Outdoor Living Skills and Environmental Awareness:** These weekly activities are similar to the initiatives described above except that they are also real-life situations. Students learn the appropriate skills to live outdoors in tents and to cook food over a fire. They learn independence and how to be good stewards of the earth. They learn respect for nature. When a student learns to respect a spider or snake, two creatures that are usually feared, and not hurt or kill them, this respect can translate into relationships between humans. ACMs lead all of these activities.

**Reality Therapy Discipline Model:** The camp's discipline model is rooted in Dr. Glasser's Reality Therapy. In essence, campers are responsible for their actions and are held accountable for them. Through this strategy students learn problem solving skills, crisis management skills, and acceptance of personal responsibility. For success ACM must establish a high level of involvement where ACM genuinely care for student, and student genuinely cares for ACM. ACMs are trained extensively in this model and help students learn there are positive and negative consequences for their actions.

**Transition to Regular Schools:** The last week (week 6) of ACE is a transitional period in which the students return to their original home-based school. During this time, ACMs meet with teachers and school counselors daily to exchange valuable academic and social information discovered during their

## Narratives

stay at camp and to monitor the progress of the ACE students. Regular teachers complete a daily report, indicating academic and behavioral successes or problems.

**Graduation Ceremony:** Students who have completed ACE and who are successful during transition participate in a graduation ceremony and receive medals and certificates signed by the school district superintendent and the camp's executive director.

**Long-term Follow Up:** Immediately after graduation, teachers of ACE graduates are encouraged to contact the camp whenever student problems reoccur. ACMs make periodic visits to all schools to meet with teachers and students and to provide any intervention necessary. The follow up coordinator maintains contact with all schools where ACE graduates attend and makes necessary visits to those schools.

**Long-term Connection:** Once campers become involved with Pfeifer Camp, they have the opportunity to stay involved in the future. Specifically, ACE graduates may come to ACE more than once; may attend summer camp through age 14; may be selected to attend Honor Camp; can participate in school follow up visits approximately 5 times per year; may become a Counselor-In-Training (CIT) at age 15; can become an AmeriCorps member or summer camp counselor at age 18.

**Consistency of ACMs and Residential Staff:** The same adults are with the campers throughout the week. In other programs, staff usually have different shifts instead of living and working there day in and day out. This allows for more holistic care in that ACMs get to see the whole picture in terms of how the camper functions in a variety of situations.

**Intentional Diversity:** By putting black and white, rich and poor, gifted and challenged youth in the cabins together, we create situations for cultural growth and development. Students from the same regular school or classroom are usually placed in separate cabins. ACMs can help the students sort through any conflicts that arise. ACMs are selected with intentional diversity as well and come from across America. We try to expose campers to different ideas and different ways of being with the idea that they will appreciate and respect these differences. This exposure helps students quickly learn that they have choices in life and that they don't have to act or live as they have in the past. Many students make life-long decisions at camp to change their behavior and attitude.

**Opportunities for Leadership and Empowerment:** During ACE there are opportunities within cabin groups and within camp as a whole for campers to engage in public speaking, leading the group, etc. The overall camp programs (ACE, summer camp, Honor Camp, and beyond) are built on many small leadership and empowerment opportunities that provide building blocks in the empowerment process. For example, at every meal one or two campers announce to the rest of the camp what part of the

## Narratives

meal can be composted. The campers receive an ovation for this. This small announcement prepares them to deliver a speech near the end of the session about camp to their peers. Selected students then deliver a speech at graduation. The variety of program provides leadership opportunities for those students who do not typically excel academically; a student in the lowest reading group may discover that she is the best firebuilder and can help teach her cabinmates. For a variety of reasons, the campers feel safe at camp and will open up about issues that they may never have discussed with anyone else.

ACMs play a crucial role in the success of ACE and in the development of individual students. Staff and other volunteers do not reside with the students as do ACMs. They serve as the primary point of adult contact for the students and serve as the "front line". They are closer in age to the students and therefore receive a good deal of "hero worship" from the students. We attract ACMs who are former campers in the program and out-of-state applicants. Former campers who become ACMs have a unique perspective and help campers see opportunities beyond their current situation. Out-of-state ACMs provide campers with a glimmer of life beyond their communities. Because of the education award and the emphasis on service, AmeriCorps attracts young people who are education-minded and service-oriented and who have the energy to live with and mentor children who do not always comply. ACMs are driven in a different way that is conducive to our program style. Our program provides value to ACMs as well. Like the students, they arrive at camp with their own skill sets and visions of their service. Through training and experience they gain some of the same skills they are trying to teach the campers: organization, oral and written communication, cooperation, and civic engagement.

EVIDENCE-BASE. External evaluation efforts conclude that ACE is an effective evidence-based intervention that demonstrates measurable community impact. 1. Review of Internal Evaluation from 2003-2013 (2013) by Terri Miller, PhD, compared ten years of internal evaluation data to similar data used in the three-year quasi-experimental study titled "Safe and Drug Free Schools: Effective Alternative Strategies" discussed below. Variables examined included parenting skills knowledge, academic skills and performance, school behavior, perceptions of student self-worth, and social issue awareness. Dr. Miller found that the data results are consistent with previous external evaluations, and the program design and structure are virtually the same as they were during those external evaluations. Specific results are as follows: Average Parent Meeting attendance was higher than 90% in all but one year. Average Parent Skills improvement ranged from 33-43 percentage points. Wide Range Achievement Test results showed consistent improvement at the .5 grade level goal. Classroom

## Narratives

Teacher Evaluations of Behavioral Performance consistently exceeded the 80% goal with percentages ranging from 83% to 95%. 2. ¿Alternative Classroom Experience Evaluation Report,¿ conducted as part of the Arkansas Service Commission AmeriCorps State Portfolio Evaluation (2011), concluded that AmeriCorps Member Enrollment Rate for the three years studied was consistently at 100% and that Retention Rates for the two years studied were 93% and 100%. ACM demographics for those three years showed 28% of members were minorities, 51% were male, and 76% were aged 20-24 years. All members had either some college (54%) or were college graduates (46%). 100% of members rated the supervision they received as good or excellent, and 92% of members rated communication with program staff as good or excellent. Predominant reasons for serving were the opportunity to give back and to develop marketable skills. Members claimed that the most important things learned through their AmeriCorps experience were techniques for working with children, communication skills, and professionalism. 3. "Safe and Drug Free Schools: Effective Alternative Strategies" (ED #S184-M000022), a three-year study funded by the U.S. Department of Education (2004), consisted of a multi-year cross-sectional study of ACE participants during the 2000-01 through 2002-03 academic years. The study included a quasi-experimental component comparing selected outcomes for ACE participants with a control group of students who were identified by school personnel as being similarly at risk but who did not participate in ACE. Results of this study, drawn from the final evaluation report prepared by Terri Miller, Ph.D., consistently show gains for ACE participants in academic skills. Substantial proportions of participants demonstrated improvement of at least one grade level. Dr. Miller concluded that available data on outcome measures gathered exclusively for ACE participants consistently showed trends toward gains in the relevant program goal domains for all three years studied. 4. ¿The Pfeifer Camp Alternative Classroom Experience Research and Evaluation Final Report¿ (1994), a two-year study by the Mid-South Center on Alcohol and Other Drug Problems at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, utilized a quasi-experimental design comparing ACE participants with a matched control group on a range of academic, behavioral, and attitudinal measures. Results indicated significant improvement in student academic achievement (reading, math, and spelling achievement test scores), student behavior (teacher ratings of work organization, positive behaviors towards the teacher, need for direction in work, social withdrawal, impatience, irrelevant thinking/talk, blaming behavior, negative-aggressive behavior, confusion over assigned tasks, and inattentive behavior), and parent problem solving attitudes and behaviors (seeking assistance from community agencies and programs, sharing concerns with close friends, believing that a problem is not likely to go away if they just wait long enough, and defining the family problem

## Narratives

in a more positive way so that they do not become too discouraged). 5. "The Alternative Classroom Experience: A Descriptive Case Study of an Intervention for At-Risk Elementary Students" (1994) by Dr. Chris Caram as part of her doctoral dissertation research relied primarily on qualitative data and provided significant feedback regarding the community's perception of ACE. Through extensive interviews with all parties involved with ACE, including parents, staff, and school personnel, Dr. Caram concluded that the longevity of ACE was due primarily to the following reasons: (i) the perceived success of students subsequent to participation in the program, (ii) continued positive public relations and commitment of the camp's executive director, and (iii) the unique residential and 24-hour counseling components of the program.

The two recent studies and the three older studies demonstrate long-term consistency of causal conclusions and a persistent positive effect on ACE participants, especially since the ACE model has changed very little over its 26 years.

MEMBER TRAINING. Member training begins with an orientation to AmeriCorps by the camp's executive director, who was the first chairman of the Arkansas Service Commission. He also provides continual discussions throughout the year at weekly staff and ACM meetings. ACMs receive over 100 hours of intensive training at the beginning of their term including the following: academic instruction techniques such as Reciprocal Teaching (a high quality, evidence-based tutoring program consistent with the state frameworks, with local school district instructional strategies, and with the Arkansas Department of Education, Title I, that is a dialogue between tutors and students with the purpose of bringing meaning to the text); Reality Therapy discipline model (includes role play and situational analysis); nonviolent crisis intervention; Standard 1st Aid and CPR; emergency procedures; service-learning curricula; outdoor living skills; environmental awareness; cabin management; intake procedures; evaluation procedures; schedule planning; community demographics; AIDS awareness; civic responsibility; conflict resolution; parent conference strategies; gang awareness; violence/anger prevention; prohibited activities; and procedural requirements for school visitation. This training will provide appropriate skills in supervising children, skills in academic support, skills in emergency care, skills in group management and crisis management, and skills in leadership. Beyond the initial training, members will receive ample supervision and ongoing instruction from staff to ensure that they are prepared to perform all activities. Other trainings occur throughout the year, including the Association for Experiential Education Conference and various state AmeriCorps trainings. Throughout the year staff and ACMs meet weekly for training or debriefing where all ACMs and staff are encouraged and empowered to address concerns and recommend solutions. Members are trained

## Narratives

in prohibited activities at the beginning of their term and reminded frequently. Because we are a residential program, monitoring compliance is relatively simple. Generated volunteers serve on-site and, therefore, require simple monitoring for compliance to prohibited activities.

**MEMBER SUPERVISION.** ACMs are directly supervised by the residential program director and follow up coordinator. Both are former ACMs and capable of providing valuable member coaching and modeling. They provide most of the initial ACE training and are on duty during the same times that ACMs are on duty. Supervisors are immediately available--even in the middle of the night. During the day supervisors are present at every activity such as the flag raising ceremony, meal times, classroom, and program activities. During the evenings supervisors monitor programming and are available in the office until bedtime and then are on-call for emergencies. Members who are tutoring are supervised by the classroom teacher. During follow up or teambuilding activities at the schools, a supervisor either participates in those activities or is readily available by phone. Supervisors are trained to recognize when ACMs need help and to step in as necessary to assist ACMs in providing care for the campers. Supervisors conduct formal weekly meetings with all staff and ACMs, provide appropriate feedback to ACMs, provide member discipline when necessary, and assess the needs of ACMs, the campers and the program in general. There is never a time when ACMs cannot contact a supervisor or the director for help or guidance. The executive director and assistant director live on site, work in the same office space as supervisors, and at least one is available 24 hours per day.

**COMMITMENT TO AMERICORPS IDENTIFICATION:** Our ACMs recognize that they represent AmeriCorps. ACMs attend all AmeriCorps sponsored events which emphasize service and civic responsibility and where ACMs recognize other AmeriCorps programs and that AmeriCorps goes beyond the camp's program. ACMs are publicly praised for their service at ACE graduations, at civic meetings, and at the annual Honor Camp breakfast where they receive a plaque for their service from the camp director, the chairman of the board, and the executive director of the Arkansas Service Commission. ACMs wear their AmeriCorps gear each day. Since they live and serve on site, we can easily monitor wearing AmeriCorps gear. ACMs practice an "elevator speech" on AmeriCorps and use this in a variety of settings such as the Kiwanis Club meeting.

### **Organizational Capability**

**ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND AND STAFFING.** The mission of Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp is to help youth live their lives more responsibly. Since 1929, Pfeifer Camp has provided a free summer residential camp program. ACE began in 1988 as a residential educational program for at-risk and economically disadvantaged elementary students, and we have overseen its operation since then.

## Narratives

Pfeifer Camp is accredited through the American Camp Association and is the first and only camp in Arkansas licensed as a residential childcare facility through the state, which requires stringent standards of practice. ACE and its staff have received many awards and recognitions over the past 25 years. In September 2012, Executive Director Sanford Tollette received the Champion of Change award from the White House and served on a panel hosted by Jim Fetig, Director of External Affairs at CNCS.

Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp has the experience, staffing and management structure to plan and implement the AmeriCorps program. The administrative and program staff who will be accountable for this program have over 100 combined years of experience at Pfeifer Camp. Five staff members have been at the camp for 20 years or more, and the executive director and assistant director designed the program and continue to oversee it after 26 years of continuous operation. The camp's financial management system consists of an executive director who secures and manages the overall camp budget, a finance director who is responsible for all reporting, an independent auditor that the camp voluntarily employs annually to ensure proper financial management, and a finance committee that meets quarterly. Executive Director Sanford Tollette (BS Early Childhood Education, White House Champion of Change, at camp since 1975) reports quarterly to the board of Kiwanis Activities, Inc. and the Downtown Kiwanis Club regarding all financial matters. Pfeifer Camp is owned and operated by Kiwanis Activities, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose board of directors are members of the Downtown Kiwanis Club and the community at large. The board meets quarterly on a formal basis, meets weekly through club meetings and provides direct oversight and support on financial, facility, and programmatic areas. The camp Assistant Director/AmeriCorps Program Director Binky Martin-Tollette (MEd, 1st Aid/CPR instructor, Water Safety Instructor, Career Development Facilitator, Certified Prevention Specialist, at camp since 1983) will provide financial and programmatic orientation and training for the camp staff. She will attend AmeriCorps meetings and trainings and relay any new information to staff. Staff will attend any relevant technical assistance trainings provided by the Arkansas Service Commission. Camp Program Director Adrienne Hagen (BS Psychology, 2 years as AMC member, at camp since 2010) will oversee the program and supervise ACMs. Camp Teachers Tammy Roberson (BA Elementary Education, MA Interpretation, 1st Aid/CPR Instructor, Certified Prevention Specialist, at camp since 1993) and Jana Johnson (BA Physical Education, at camp since 1991) will oversee tutoring activities and will supervise ACMs when tutoring. Follow Up Coordinator Mike Machella (2 years as AMC member, at camp since 2010) will supervise ACMs during regular school events. Health Director Diane France (LPN, at camp since 2011) will

## Narratives

monitor the well-being of, and administer medication for, staff, ACMs and students. Other staff are Food Service Director Mary Smith (at camp since 2004) and Maintenance Director Buddy King (at camp since 1991). While the executive director, finance director and administrative assistant have a significant role in the administration of this grant, they are not listed in personnel and are included in the administrative fee. All staff have experience managing and/or operating under a federal grant. At Pfeifer Camp we have administered AmeriCorps grants since 1999. We have also administered two federal grants and currently operate two federal programs through the Arkansas Department of Education. We feel confident that we have the experience to administer this federal grant.

COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY. Monitoring our program is relatively simple compared to many AmeriCorps programs. We only have one site, all members live on site and serve on-site, and the program developers who have led the program for 26 years both live on-site. Since all members live and serve on-site, supervision and support are immediately available. Four administrative staff members including the executive and assistant directors are available to provide 24 hour supervision and support. All of the program directors are former Pfeifer Camp ACMs and, therefore, can relate fully to their experience and can provide relevant guidance and oversight. We have operated an AmeriCorps program for many years and are fully aware of the AmeriCorps rules and regulations, especially those related to prohibited activities. ACMs are informed by the camp program director as to the prohibited service activities. Our ACMs undergo extensive training and development, including two weeks of startup training and weekly in-service trainings. They also have three other trainings outside of camp during the year, including AmeriCorps trainings that specifically address prohibited activities. These activities are reviewed throughout the year. ACMs sign a copy of the prohibited activities prior to serving. The program director monitors ACMs for compliance with rules on prohibited service activities during the residential component. We are also fully aware of the requirements regarding non-duplication and non-displacement. We will not violate those regulations. We do not know of any other programming similar to ACE that is available in Arkansas, and thus there are no duplication issues. Our ACMs provide a specific service that could not be confused with camp staff roles, so there are no displacement issues. The Arkansas Service Commission conducts quarterly program director meetings and monthly conference calls to keep grantees abreast of any rule changes and to review the current rules as needed. If any issues related to compliance arise, we would immediately contact the Arkansas Service Commission for guidance. In addition to the rules and regulations of AmeriCorps, we also adhere to the rules and regulations of the American Camp Association and the Arkansas Department of Human Services.

## Narratives

PAST PERFORMANCE FOR CURRENT GRANTEEES AND FORMER GRANTEEES ONLY. Over the last three years of program operations, we have met and exceeded all of our performance measure targets for all outcomes and outputs. This included 85% of ACE students demonstrated improvement of at least one-half grade level in reading, spelling, and/or math. This statistic means that 85% of ACE students exhibited five months of academic growth in only five weeks. Another output was 85% of behavior ratings from the regular classroom teacher after ACE program were "good" or "excellent," which means that 85% of the students behaved appropriately upon return to the regular classroom. Both of these outputs indicate significant success in solving the identified problem of low academic performance and poor behavioral choices. There were no compliance issues or areas of weakness or risk identified during the last year of program operation.

ENROLLMENT. Enrollment rate for 2012-13 was 108%. We filled all slots plus one refill slot.

RETENTION. Our retention rate for 2012-13 was 83% (15 out of 18 members), as we had 15 members exit with a full award, and three members who exited early. Egrants reports our retention rate as 78% (11 out of 14 members) because it did not factor in our two quarter-time and two minimum-time members. The three members left the program because they did not feel like it was a good match and/or did not feel effective in their positions. In an effort to improve our retention rate for 2013-14, we added two more ACMs to serve as team leaders. These positions were filled by second-year members, a male and a female, who have provided support for new members. As a result our retention rate thus far for 2013-14 is 100% and seems to be a direct result of this additional support. We will also begin the recruitment process earlier to allow for a more in-depth interview process, including on-site interviews when possible to allow potential ACMs to observe the living requirements involved in a residential program. We have found that ACMs with prior camp or residential experience tend to adapt more readily to the program and residential demands than those without that experience. We hope to add some interactive resources to the camp's website to help potential out-of state ACMs gain a fuller understanding of camp life and how the program operates. Because of the intensity and demand of the program, ACMs need a strong support system from the administrative and program staff. The weekly staff meetings are effective in allowing ACMs and staff to voice concerns and resolve issues that may have arisen during the week. To provide additional support, the staff and/or team leaders will meet with ACMs individually during the week to provide feedback and guidance. To help improve the overall esprit de corps, we are continually looking for ways to alleviate the intensity and stress of the position. When youth are not in residence, the administrative staff organize team bonding programs such as outings away from camp and opportunities for additional

## Narratives

training and service.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. Annually and weekly throughout the year, the entire program is scrutinized through a series of evaluation tools. Students, ACMs, parents and teachers complete weekly evaluations that are used to assess the program and individual student progress. ACMs evaluate their experience after each session and participate in at least two formal evaluations. A formal compilation of all data is organized each year into a comprehensive report that is discussed with all interested parties, including the Kiwanis Activities Board and other stakeholders. The outputs and outcomes are tracked through a system of evaluation tools, including attendance rosters, comparisons of pre and posttests, program and training schedules, registration intake information, and service documentation. School personnel complete annual evaluations on ACE and ACE graduates, including progress in academics and behavior. Each year we meet with school counselors to discuss ACE and program changes.

### **Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy**

COST EFFECTIVENESS. For 90 years Pfeifer Camp and the Downtown Kiwanis Club have sustained a cost-effective service for the underprivileged youth-at-risk of our community. Within the proposed budget we maintain that cost-effectiveness by matching at 57% of the program budget, higher than the maximum required match and 5% higher than our previous grant. We operate under the maximum COST PER MSY allowable, and we have lowered that amount from our previous grant cycle. Our ability to match at a high rate is due to our success in sustaining significant partners. We are the first and only AmeriCorps program in Arkansas to coordinate federal to federal match with our 21st Century Community Learning Centers (\$240,000) and our Title I, Part A Neglected (\$50,000) federal grants. From the private sector, we have matching funds from the Kiwanis Club (\$100,000) and from two local foundations, The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation (50,000) and the Charles A. Frueauff Foundation (\$20,000). We also receive matching funds from the Little Rock School District (\$174,000) and Pulaski County School District (\$124,900). Approximately 30% of the funds outlined above are used to match the CNCS funds we are requesting. CNCS funds represent approximately 20% of the agency's overall budget. The agency's overall budget includes additional funds for programs that are not the primary objectives of our AmeriCorps program but that do complement it. For instance, we receive funding for our College and Career Program for CITs. Even though these funds do not pay for AmeriCorps, the ACMs benefit through inclusion in college visits and career field trips. We benefit from having diverse funding resources for program implementation.

The Pfeifer Camp programs are very cost effective. We know of no other program that provides an

## Narratives

intensive residential educational program for at-risk 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students in a camp environment. For many of these students, our program serves as a testing ground to see if clinical, and much more costly, services are needed which could be in the form of a treatment facility. Our program at a cost of approximately \$3,000 per student for a five-week program (or approximately \$100 per day) is much more cost effective than a group home program at a cost of over \$200 per day and a residential treatment program at a cost of over \$300 per day. Our statistics are cost benefits, as they demonstrate remarkable academic and behavioral changes in students in a short timeframe of five weeks. Other benefits are less obvious. We are now serving the children and grandchildren of students who participated in the program 26 years ago. No one can take away Pfeifer Camp memories and impressions on an impressionable child who craves boundaries and acceptance. Pfeifer Camp becomes a second home for these students. This is not a typical benefit of residential treatment facilities. We have had many former campers and parents say that ACE made all the difference for them. That is the highest honor; how do we put a cost benefit on that?

**BUDGET ADEQUACY.** The proposed budget is adequate to support our program design and will allow us to conduct program activities and achieve desired outputs and outcomes. This budget is enhanced by the camp's overall budget that supports ACE, summer camp, and other Pfeifer Camp programs. These grant funds would be used primarily for direct support of ACMs: living allowance, benefits, physicals, background checks, training, and service gear. The grant also supports a small percentage of several staff salaries/benefits. Staff supported by this grant provide the necessary supervision and training for ACMs and the necessary administrative and financial management of the grant. Costs for member training are minimal since most of the training is provided on site by staff. The program equipment and supplies are supported primarily through matching funds. The AmeriCorps budget submitted is limited to items that are directly funded by AmeriCorps. We are fortunate to have diverse funding resources to subsidize overall programming costs.

Our organization was founded in 1929, our current director has been here since 1974, the ACE program began in 1988, and our budget and programming have grown significantly over the past 90 years. Therefore, we have extensive history, experience and growth to indicate we are very capable of managing this grant. We are proud of our accomplishments in terms of academic and behavioral growth in the students we serve. Of course, the most important accomplishments are the everyday miracles that happen with the campers due to the service of the ACMs. It is too early to tell the futures of Brad, Anna, Kathy and Alex. We hope they will follow in the footsteps of many ACE graduates and make significant academic and behavioral advances and lead productive and responsible lives.

# Narratives

## Evaluation Summary or Plan

Our 14 AmeriCorps Members (ACMs) will implement the Alternative Classroom Experience (ACE) and Summer Incentive Program for at-risk youth. ACE targets 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students with low academic performance and poor behavioral choices. We anticipate that full participation in ACE followed by the summer camp program improves academic performance and behavioral decision-making through a multi-faceted approach that relies heavily on extensive AMC tutoring and mentoring in a wilderness camp setting for an intensive five-week residential experience during the school year followed by a residential summer camp experience. Specifically, the expected outcomes are as follows: (1) Two-thirds of the students who complete ACE will demonstrate at least five months of academic growth during a five-week period as evidenced by grade level scores on pre and post Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT). (2) Two-thirds of the students who participate in ACE will demonstrate improved academic engagement as demonstrated by pre and post teacher surveys.

As a CNCS program that receives significantly less than \$500,000 per year, we will conduct an internal evaluation. In addition we will utilize an external evaluator to review our internal evaluation annually. Our primary research questions, methodology, outcomes, data collection procedures, and how results will be used are as follows:

(1) How many students were served? Parents and teachers will complete registration forms and statements of need prior to program entry. When student slots are confirmed, attendance will be maintained through the head classroom teacher's daily participation log and through the administrative assistant's daily attendance log. Attendance will be charted for reporting purposes to CNCS and other funders. Low attendance and/or low program completion rates will be discussed internally and will be addressed with school personnel as needed.

(2) How many students demonstrated academic improvement according to WRAT results? On the first full day of participation in ACE, an internal evaluator will implement the math, reading, and spelling portions of the WRAT. The evaluator will score the WRAT and input the data into a computer data base. This process will be repeated on the last full day of ACE. Results will be shared with parents and teachers and will be used to determine an academic improvement success rate for that ACE session of students and to evaluate progress in specific math and reading groups. The external evaluator will compare the year's WRAT results to previous years to determine any anomalies and will include this information in an annual written review of program evaluation results.

(3) How many students demonstrated behavioral improvement in the form of academic engagement as demonstrated by pre and post teacher surveys? At the end of the first full week of

## Narratives

participation in ACE, the head classroom will assess each student's level of academic engagement. This process will be repeated each week. At the end of the session the internal evaluator will compare the first week's assessment with the last week's assessment to determine if improvement in academic engagement was achieved. The external evaluator will review this information annually to compare rates to previous years and to highlight any anomalies.

(4) How many parents of at-risk students were served? The program director monitors and maintains all Parent Meeting attendance sheets. The administrative assistant records that attendance into the computer system. The results are reported to all funding entities and are reviewed internal and by the external evaluator.

Other measurements record the number of volunteer hours, academic and behavioral performance after student return to the regular classroom, parenting skills, student behavior during weekend visits at home, parent perception of student improvement, student perception of self and program, AMC perception of student improvement, AMC perception of program, and school personnel perception of program and student improvement. Measurement tools are as follows: report cards through 7th grade; Wide Range Achievement Test; counselor evaluation of camper; camper evaluation of program; parent evaluation of program; parent workshop pre and post testing; Weekend Evaluation Form completed by parents; Academic and Behavioral Assessment Form completed by staff on all campers; Daily Report Form completed by regular classroom teachers each day of the transition period; principal, counselor, and teacher evaluations of program and of students; pre and post testing of AIDS Awareness, Violence Prevention, and Drug and Alcohol Awareness; staff and CIT evaluation of program; teacher-made tests; staff observations; and successful completion of activities and program culminating in graduation. All data will be compiled by the assistant director to assess student progress, perception of student improvement by regular teacher, overall perceived effectiveness of program through analysis of evaluation forms, and knowledge gained through pre and post testing scores. Data will be assessed quarterly with a full report compiled annually in August that will be reviewed by our external evaluator and shared with all stakeholders. Results are reviewed by staff and some by AmeriCorps members to assess what programmatic changes might be necessary.

### Amendment Justification

N/A

### Clarification Summary

A. Programmatic Clarification

## Narratives

1. Grant Start Date and Member Enrollment Period: While CNCS will prioritize early submitted start dates in award processing, the earliest possible start date we can consider is 06/01/2014. It is not permitted for an applicant to re-submit with an earlier start date than previously submitted. Please review the requested grant award start date and member enrollment period start date in the Applicant Info section of your application. Please make any corrections necessary. In the Clarification Summary field, please enter a statement confirming the desired grant award start and member enrollment period start.

ANSWER: We have reviewed the grant award start and member enrollment period start date and now confirm that the date is 09/01/2014.

2. It is not clear why the Health Director, Food Service Director, Maintenance Supervisor are included in the budget under personnel expenses. Please explain.

ANSWER: The Health Director monitors the physical and mental health and well-being of all students, staff and AmeriCorps members. Members are not allowed to keep any medication in the cabins when children are present, so the Health Director secures that medication for students and members and provides it to them as prescribed and/or as needed. American Camp Association standards require a licensed practical nurse be on site daily when children are present. The Food Service Director provides all meals to students and AmeriCorps members when children are present. Members are required to eat meals with the students. The Food Service Director also provides guidance to members in menu planning for camp cookouts, which are a vital part of the AmeriCorps member service. The Maintenance Supervisor is responsible for the upkeep of the entire facility. He also provides technical assistance and manpower to all aspects of the gardening program, and he works with the members on all activities that require power tools such as building birdhouses and various arts and crafts projects.

3. Staff is not included in the line item for criminal history checks. Please explain.

ANSWER: We conduct criminal history checks on all camp staff members, whether or not the position is funded by AmeriCorps. All of the staff listed in the budget already have cleared criminal history checks on file. We do not anticipate any staff turnover; however, if any new staff are hired,

## Narratives

those criminal history checks will be funded by other resources and not by AmeriCorps or as AmeriCorps match.

4. The MSYs and slots for the performance measures do not align with the narrative. ED2/ED5 has 3.5 MSY and 14 slots assigned to the measure. ED4A/ED27 has 7 MSY and 14 slots assigned. According to the narrative all 14 MSY/14 full-time members will perform activities under both measures. Please explain.

ANSWER: We entered the wrong numbers for MSYs for our performance measures. These numbers have been corrected as follows: ED2/ED5 has 4 MSY and 14 slots assigned to the measure. ED4A/ED27 has 10 MSY and 14 slots assigned.

5. The applicant states that 25% of MSY are not assigned to any performance measure. Please explain.

ANSWER: The percentage identified above was the result of entering the wrong numbers for MSYs for our performance measures. These numbers have been corrected as indicated in #4 above so that 100% of MSY are assigned to performance measures.

6. 14 full-time members will serve a total of 400 students. Please justify the number of MSY/members needed to serve in the program.

ANSWER: Our programs are residential, serving students 24 hours per day from Sunday through Friday. Most other AmeriCorps programs only operate during the day which is much less time than our program. Also, the students in our program are considered at-risk which includes both academic and behavioral issues. The challenging nature of the program and the clientele require a lower adult/student ratio than most other programs. As a licensed residential childcare facility through the Arkansas Department of Human Services, it is required that two adults accompany all 4 cabin groups 24 hours per day from Sunday through Friday each week. This requires 8 full-time members. The other 6 members serve as tutors in the classroom and fill in during cabin time to provide breaks for the 8 members assigned to the cabins.

7. The applicant describes monitoring member activities, but there are no details provided for

## Narratives

oversight of member time sheets and files. Please explain.

ANSWER: The camp's program director provides oversight of member time sheets. The camp's assistant director/AmeriCorps Program Director maintains and oversees the member files. Some staff are responsible for ensuring and reviewing certain parts of the member files. For instance, the finance director ensures that member files contain W4s, W2s, and living allowance check stubs; the administrative assistant ensures that member files contain training documentation; and the health director ensures that member files contain health physicals. All member files are stored in the locked finance office.

### B. Budget Clarification

1. Please explain to CNCS how the program will meet its cash needs as it relates to the estimated unrestricted revenue expenses which were less than expenses in 2 or more of the last 3 years. Please provide this explanation in the Clarification Summary section and clearly label the response as pertaining to financial clarification.

ANSWER: According to our records, there was only one year (2010) out of the last three years in which the unrestricted revenue was less than expenses before depreciation which should put our financial health at low risk. Also, our recently completed Form 990 shows that for the third year in a row (2011, 2012, and 2013), our unrestricted revenue was greater than expenses before depreciation. We also receive funding from the U. S. Department of Education, 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21 CCLC) that was approved by both CNCS and the U.S. Department of Education as CNCS match funding. We do not anticipate any challenges in meeting our cash needs.

### C. Strategic Engagement Slots Clarification

1. What percentage of slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities? What is the program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community?

ANSWER: Two out of the 14 slots or 14% of the slots will be targeted to recruit members with disabilities. Our plan is to recruit these members using the same methods we use to recruit all members. In our past recruitment periods, we typically enroll one or more members with disabilities. During the interview process, we do not ask if the applicant has disabilities; however, because of the

## Narratives

nature of our program, applicants want to make sure they will be able to perform satisfactorily, so they frequently offer the information. If we are not able to recruit members with disabilities using these methods, we will revise our recruitment methods.

2. In order to increase the number of individuals with disabilities serving as AmeriCorps members, CNCS is offering applicants the opportunity to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities. The additional MSYs would be funded at the clarification cost per MSY level. Applicants must describe their intent to recruit, engage and retain additional members with disabilities and provide a detailed outreach plan for how these members will be recruited and supported (e.g. established recruitment partners or strategies). In addition, programs receiving these additional member positions will be required to report specific details on the success of the recruitment, supervision and retention of AmeriCorps members with disabilities in semi-annual progress reports. If the program would like to request additional MSYs to be filled by AmeriCorps members with disabilities, please describe your intent as requested above. Also indicate how many MSYs the program would like to request, the number of slots by slot type, and where the additional members will serve. Add these additional MSYs to the application budget.

ANSWER: While we intend to recruit members with disabilities, we are not requesting additional MSYs.

### D. No-Cost MSY Clarification

MSY with no program funds attached: Applicants may request No-Cost MSYs. These additional no-cost MSYs are national service positions in which no grant funds will be awarded. In other words, grantees could receive additional AmeriCorps positions but no additional grant funds. Programs will be responsible for using their own or other resources to pay program costs, member support costs and other operating expenses. Keep in mind that full-time AmeriCorps program costs include expenditures for the AmeriCorps living allowance, health care and criminal history checks. Programs are not required to pay living allowances or cover health care for less-than-full-time members.

If the program would like to request No-Cost MSYs, please edit the budget as appropriate (for example, line items for member gear or criminal history checks may need to be revised). Please ensure performance measure targets and MSY allocations align with these additional MSYs. Lastly,

## Narratives

please include a response to each item below in the Clarification Summary field:

1. The number and type of slots requested. Please confirm that, for the MSYs requested, the additional members will only engage in activities aligned with the proposed member activities outlined in the application narrative.
2. A description of resources that will be provided to adequately support the additional members and how they are sufficient to; support the member support costs, management, oversight, program operations, and the program activities.
3. Source(s) of non-CNCS funds. Provide a brief description of the amount, classification (cash or in-kind), source(s) (State/Local, Federal, Private) for all resources secured to manage, monitor, and support these additional members.
4. The organization's capability and capacity to successfully implement, manage, and monitor the additional members.

ANSWER: We are not requesting any No-Cost MSYs.

### E. Healthcare Clarification

1. Please provide the name of the health insurance provider the program is proposing to use to insure the AmeriCorps members.

ANSWER: Summit America

2. How did the program select the provider? (for example, direct marketing, through the Health Insurance Marketplace or other means)

ANSWER: I am aware of only three providers for Corps member insurance (Aetna, BCS, and Summit America) and this information was provided by the Arkansas Service Commission in our Director's Manual distributed at our AmeriCorps Program Director's Meeting. We insure Corps Members through Summit America, and they have been our preferred carrier for several years.

3. Does the proposed budget for member healthcare provide for Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) coverage, as defined by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), for your full-time members?

## Narratives

ANSWER: We are aware of no insurance plan for Corps Members that meets MEC as defined by the ACA. We have been notified by Summit America that our insurance plan for Corps members does not provide for MEC. We have been notified that our members may be subject to the individual responsibility penalty on their 2014 tax return. BCS has also confirmed that their insurance policy for AmeriCorps members does not meet MEC as defined by the ACA. Aetna discontinued their AmeriCorps insurance coverage as of January 1, 2014.

4. If not, what adjustment to the budget is necessary in order to provide Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC)?

ANSWER: Because AmeriCorps members are not employees, it is my understanding that they cannot be covered by our camp's employee insurance policy. We are required by the terms of our AmeriCorps grant to offer healthcare insurance to full-time members. However, to the best of our knowledge, there are no policies available for AmeriCorps Members that offer MEC as defined by the ACA. No adjustment to the budget will help if there is no policy available to Corps Members that offers MEC. We do not want our Members to be penalized on their 2014 tax returns. The only option I am aware of for our AmeriCorps Members to receive insurance that has MEC per ACA is for them to each get an individual policy from their state of residence through the Marketplace or other means. Most likely the Member will have to pay for the coverage and then be reimbursed by us. I think this will be a financial burden to the members and a cumbersome process to deal with 4 or 5 different insurance companies from different states. If we are required to pay for individual policies, we do not have an estimate of how this would affect our budget at this time.

5. If the program does not have enough information to answer question (4), please explain why not and/or what prevented the program from being able to obtain the necessary information.

ANSWER: At this point there is no insurance carrier offering a plan to Corps Members as a group that offers MEC per the ACA. We also do not have a way to determine the cost of individual plans of Corps Members.

### Continuation Changes

N/A

## Grant Characteristics