

National Service Impact in Arkansas

AmeriCorps

Each year the Kiwanis Alternate Classroom Experience (ACE) AmeriCorps program in Little Rock turns around the lives of more than 150 children in third through fifth grade in a series of five-week, live-in sessions. Through intensive, on-site educational interventions, behavior modification, and family buy-in, children who created problems in school and at home are helped to understand and improve their schoolwork, appreciate discipline and structure, and gain a new lease on life before bigger problems can develop. At the end of the session 75 to 85 percent of the students routinely improve at least one-half grade level in reading, spelling and/or math. Results are measured by the Wide Range Achievement Test. More than half the results show behavioral improvement as assessed by teachers immediately after their camp session and through the end of the academic year. As a residential program, ACE is able to alter eating habits, increase exercise, develop an appreciation for the outdoors, and expand the minds of the students. Several alumni have returned as AmeriCorps members and have served with distinction.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The mission of the Arkansas Children's Hospital Research Institute in Little Rock is to improve children's health, development, and well-being through high quality research. Their vision is to be a leader in cutting-edge research that improves the health and well-being of children and their families. An AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) team working with the institute maintained four community gardens in the Little Rock area and six school gardens throughout Arkansas, as well as one organic farm. Specifically, the AmeriCorps NCCC team weeded, mulched, planted, transplanted, built crop beds, tilled soil, and harvested 5.25 acres of gardens and farms. Additionally, the team built two 30' x 48' greenhouses and two 4' x 8' compost systems.

AmeriCorps VISTA

The Our House AmeriCorps VISTA project engages eleven members to develop and coordinate programs and activities to transition people from homelessness into the workforce and permanent housing. In 2012, the VISTA members worked with Our House, Inc. to provide emergency shelter to 962 homeless people, including 238 children; provide transitional housing to 85 people, including 24 children; provide early childhood education to 96 homeless or extremely low-income school-aged children; provide adult education to 675 homeless or extremely low-income adults; and assist 416 formerly homeless people to move from homelessness into transitional or permanent housing. In addition, of the previously homeless adults who participated in Our House programs, 85 percent moved from homelessness to transitional or permanent housing, 59 percent left with full-time jobs, and 63 percent left with a savings account.

Senior Corps

Working in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service TCE and VITA programs, 32 WestArk RSVP members in Fort Smith prepared and electronically filed federal and state tax returns for senior citizens and/or low-income workers/families that may be disabled, non-English speaking, or living in a rural area. The free tax preparation and electronic filing service offered at the RSVP center aided more than 2,000 families who received \$2,448,930 in refunds. Federal returns were prepared for 2,007 families and as well as 2,257 state returns. Efforts to increase the number of families filing for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) were successful with \$708,083 in EITC received. Returns were prepared for 649 seniors who were 60 years of age or older. Tax efforts were supported by a \$15,000 Tax Counseling for the Elderly grant from the Internal Revenue Service.