

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA members serving at The Stand Foundation in North Little Rock have made tremendous progress in expanding the projects Edward Coleman Leadership Institute (ECLI) statewide. In 2014, 65 adults graduated from the institute. Through the efforts of VISTA members, the project received a \$109,492 grant to provide leadership training in the Delta Area of the state and an \$8,000 grant to support ECLI scholarships. The VISTA members also helped the project obtain an \$82,000 grant to establish a fee-for-service model for two- and four-year colleges in Arkansas and to place VISTA members in schools and communities to conduct outreach, recruitment, and partnership building. The grant will also allow the project to customized leadership training for African-American and Latino males from underserved backgrounds and participate in the national Boys and Men of Color Leadership Sustainability Institute.

AmeriCorps VISTA members at the Prism Education Center in Fayetteville helped raise more than \$153,000 in cash and in-kind resources. VISTA members wrote a proposal to the City of Fayetteville to secure a 5,000 square foot facility, rent free, to expand space to add 100 children more to the program. VISTA members also developed resources to open two new food programs that will serve high quality, nutritious food to students and participated in writing a grant for the city of Fayetteville Community Development Block Grant program that generated \$20,000 for the project. VISTAs also supported the project by developing an orientation system for new employees, designing and developing an internal staff website, creating a system to better generate data from the student assessments, revising the parent handbook, and creating materials for the Teacher Institute and an intense training program that all new teaching staff must complete. During the 2013 service year, the Prism Education Center served 155 students and their families; 70 percent of the students came from low- to moderate-income households.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The City of Little Rock received an AmeriCorps NCCC team to help with The Love Your School initiative, a childhood obesity intervention program. The LYS initiative serves over 2,700 low income students in schools located in, near or with school attendance zones that overlap USDA designated Food Deserts in Little Rock, Arkansas. NCCC Members were deployed to Little Rock, which is one of the top 10 most obese cities in America, to provide direct, hands-on service and support to all seven Partner Schools in all programs in support of the LYS Childhood Obesity Initiative. The NCCC team provided support in a number of ways: delivering nutrition presentations to students; constructing raised bed gardens; building rain barrel collections systems and lead physical activity programs. The outcomes of the projects included: The construction of six water tables at four elementary schools; implementing LYS Program at seven Elementary schools assisting over 571 students; Running two community forums in the city of little Rock; conducting over 600 BMI tests at three elementary schools; and maintaining seven community gardens.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team assisted the Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH) to improve the quality of care for both its patients and their families. ACH is among the largest children's hospitals in the United States and the only hospital in the state of Arkansas dedicated entirely to children. Corps members were assigned to the Child Life, Fitness & Wellness, and Infection Control Departments. By assisting in play and craft activities, providing one-on-one education, infant stimulation, and daily interaction with patients the team was able to lessen the load of the child life staff allowing them to dedicate their time to the more crucial aspects of their occupation. Corps members were often called upon to work with children who would benefit from further interaction. Game nights and day spas were organized to promote wellness and a relaxed atmosphere for patients' families as well as the staff. The team also aided in cultivating a nurturing environment by decorating windows, designing bulletin boards, and other fun activities. These activities not only improved the experience of the children staying in the hospital, but also in turn had a positive impact on the families of these children.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Foster Grandparents with the Southeast Arkansas Education Cooperative Foster Grandparent program serve in eight public schools, one alternative center, one early childhood education center, three centers for developmentally disabled, five Head Start programs, a day care center, and a program for pre-school children of community college students. Twenty-two percent of the children living in the five county service area live in poverty compared to 14.3 percent nationally, and the service area has been targeted by the Arkansas Department of Education for improvement. Sixty-nine Foster Grandparent volunteers served 345 elementary children in daily tutoring sessions, with 88 percent of students approaching, meeting, or exceeding framework standards. Prior to Foster Grandparent intervention, only 13 percent were hitting this mark. Sixty-eight Foster Grandparents served 340 preschool children, and 99 percent of the preschoolers engaged in the program met or exceeded the framework standards.

Senior Corps RSVP

RSVP volunteers with the Tri-County RSVP program/El Dorado Connections in El Dorado assist 60 homebound elders at least once a week to provide companionship and support. They also assist elderly and low income individuals in federal and state income tax preparation through the Volunteers Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs. In 2007, a Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration stated that, "The volunteer program plays an increasingly important role in achieving the IRS goal of improving taxpayer service and facilitating participation in the tax system. In 2014, eight TRI-County RSVP volunteers assisted 374 individuals with tax returns, and assisted an additional 33 individuals with filing late returns. This saved elders in the community more than \$61,000. Twenty-six RSVP volunteers assisted 60 senior or disabled individuals with transportation to medical appointments, trips to the grocery store, chores, and minor repairs.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Senior Companion volunteers with the Central Arkansas Senior Companion Program in North Little Rock work with homebound seniors in central Arkansas. The six county service area in which Senior Companions serve (Pulaski, Faulkner, Lonoke, Prairie, Saline, and Monroe) has a senior population of more than 114,750, with 42 percent or 45,904 living below the national poverty level. With the changing Medicaid eligibility and the high cost of privately paying for care, many seniors are just unable to afford to live independently. During 2014, 30 Senior Companion volunteers assisted with light housekeeping, meal preparation, transportation, and socialization in order to keep the individuals in their own homes and living independently as long as possible. In 2013, 100 percent of senior clients and caregivers reported that their ability to live independently was maintained or improved.