

AmeriCorps VISTA

Alliance of Arizona AmeriCorps VISTA Jeff Schlueter serving with United Way of Northern Arizona (UWNA) in Flagstaff helps strengthen the VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) program to increase the United Way's ability assist low-income taxpayers throughout northern Arizona. UWNA's VITA program helped fill in the gap of services when the local IRS office closed several years ago. With Schlueter's assistance, the United Way was able to enlist more than 200 volunteers to serve more than 5,000 hours. These volunteers helped more than 5,000 families and individuals to receive free tax services and claim more than \$2 million in Earned Income Tax Credits. Schlueter cultivated new partnerships to expand the program's service area. The VITA program now serves communities throughout Coconino and Navajo County and the Hopi reservation. To ensure that the program continues to provide quality service, Schlueter created client surveys to gather feedback so that the program can make future improvements. Thanks to Schlueter's efforts the UWNA's VITA program passed its federal audit with 100 percent compliance for the first time.

The Arizona Serves AmeriCorps VISTA project at Prescott College recruits and manages AmeriCorps VISTA members in Yavapai County and Tucson to serve with local nonprofits and government entities on projects that addressed poverty. Over the past year, these members managed 16,879 community volunteers who served 64,755 hours and helped raise \$609,285 in cash resources. One of these VISTA members, Adair Brown, served with the Tucson Mayor's Commission on Poverty and the Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness (TPCH). The Mayor's Commission, composed of business and nonprofit leaders, is developing a research driven, collective impact initiative to reduce poverty in Tucson. Adair assisted the Mayor's Commission with planning, research, and identification of area experts. With TPCH, Adair helped develop a community-wide coordinated assessment system for accessing homeless services. This tool ensures that scarce housing resources are used efficiently to assist people experiencing homelessness. Adair also recruited and managed more than 100 volunteers to assist with the Housing and Urban Development Point-in-Time Count of individuals experiencing homelessness, and then developed a manual to improve future counts.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The City of Casa Grande, Arizona is the largest city in Pinal County with just under 50,000 residents. Seventeen percent (17%) of Casa Grande families live under the poverty level and over 60% of students at Casa Grande schools are eligible for the free or reduced lunch program. The Community Services Department (CSD) of Casa Grande is one of eight providing services for the nearly 50,000 residents within city boundaries. The CSD partnered with an AmeriCorps NCCC team in order to provide high quality recreational experiences at a low cost for residences. An NCCC team was able to assist the city through work on Casa Grande Mountain, West Pinal Park, the Pinal County Fairgrounds, and the local rodeo grounds. During their time working at these sites, Corps members helped build three and a half miles and maintain seven miles of trail, painted the interior of two exhibit barns on the fairgrounds, constructed a 722 square foot patio at the front entrance of the fairgrounds, and built 50 feet of retaining wall at the fairgrounds. Due to the NCCC team, The City of Casa Grande now has safer hiking trails, improved facilities for events, and a better ability to attract tourists.

American Conservation Experience (ACE) operates under the conservation corps model to implement a variety of environmental restoration projects for land management agencies and non-profit organizations across the US. Members worked on four distinct projects with the ACE: thin a dense Ponderosa Pine forest, help build one mile of dirt bike trail in the Coconino National Forest-Kelly Canyon, eradicate invasive plant species in the Prescott, AZ area, and assist in the destruction and reconstruction of a dry stone masonry wall. Members of the Flagstaff community benefited in many ways due to the work of AmeriCorps NCCC. The team's work in thinning the ponderosa pine forest will help reduce the risk of wildfires. Residents of Flagstaff and visitors with dirt bikes will have the opportunity to expand their views of the Coconino National Forest due to the new trail. The removal of invasive plants will allow native plants to compete for growth along the waterways. Finally, a section of the Arizona Trail that runs from southern Utah to Nogales, AZ will be protected from large vehicles and ATVs through the construction of a stone wall, which will allow the community will be able to enjoy this trail.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Northern Arizona University's Civic Service Institute engages Foster Grandparent volunteers to serve as tutors and mentors to disadvantaged youth living in Apache, Coconino, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pima, Pinal, Yavapai and Yuma Counties. Last fiscal year, 193 FGP volunteers served 156,789 hours assisting 770 children. Of children assisted by FGP volunteers statewide, 100 percent showed improved motor skills; 91 percent demonstrated improved intellectual/thinking skills; 94 percent showed improved social/emotional skills; and 97 percent demonstrated improved language development skills as rated by classroom teachers. Furthermore, 96 percent of children showed improved confidence in their motor skills; 92 percent showed improved confidence in their intellectual/thinking skills; 92 percent demonstrated improved confidence in their social/emotional skills, and 97 percent demonstrated improved confidence in their language development skills.

Senior Corps RSVP

The RSVP Program of Northern and Western Arizona, sponsored by Northern Arizona University's Civic Service Institute, engages volunteers to serve in many capacities including healthy futures, education, and veterans and military families. In fiscal year 2014, RSVP volunteers had especially significant impacts working with students and addressing hunger issues. Eleven RSVP Literacy Coaches worked with 167 students throughout the 2013-2014 school year and 88 percent of students improved their reading skills. Additionally, 84 RSVP volunteers served 16,289 hours to improve food security in their local communities. These volunteers gleaned, organized, and distributed food for food banks, delivered Meals on Wheels to homebound elderly individuals, and prepared and served meals to those in need at food kitchens, serving 32,000 individuals throughout the year. Partner agencies reported that 98 percent of clients responded they were better able to feed themselves and address other priorities in their lives due to the meals and emergency food boxes they received.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Our Family Services, located in Tucson, engages Senior Companion volunteers to assist seniors living independently in Pima County. Last fiscal year, 45 Senior Companions served 46,592 hours assisting 552 seniors and caregivers. Of the clients assisted by Senior Companion volunteers, 90 percent reported they were able to remain living independently due to the support they received from their Senior Companion volunteer. Clients reported receiving support in at least two of eight activities of daily living, such as assistance with transportation, light grooming, light meal preparation, etc. Of the caregivers assisted by Senior Companion volunteers, 80 percent reported decreased stress as a result of receiving respite services and 80 percent reported that they are better able to provide caregiving support to their elder, allowing the client to remain living in the home.