

AmeriCorps State

The Connecticut Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Network AmeriCorps program engages middle and high school students in the Youth Health Service Corps and college students in the Collegiate Health Service Corps, leading students in service learning projects that address pressing community health issues. The AmeriCorps members aim to improve academic engagement of economically disadvantaged students through participation in service learning programs and health workshops. The four regional centers of the Connecticut AHEC Network host full-time AmeriCorps members impacting communities across the entire state of Connecticut. The program will increase AmeriCorps members' educational and professional status by providing a vast amount of experience working with schools, nonprofits, health care agencies and other community partners

FoodCorps recruits, trains, and places emerging leaders into limited-resource schools for a year of service implementing a three-ingredient recipe for healthy kids: 1) hands on food and nutrition education, 2) experiential education in school gardens and through cooking lessons, and 3) healthy food access in cafeterias. FoodCorps AmeriCorps members are based in some of the highest need school districts and work side-by-side with committed teachers, school administrators, food service directors, and community-based organizations to help improve school food environments. The 15 communities and school districts selected for FoodCorps CT were chosen based on eligibility rates for free and reduced priced school lunch, and the capacity to supervise and make effective use of a FoodCorps AmeriCorps member. In order to carry out their terms of service, AmeriCorps members will acquire training in experiential education of nutrition and gardening, building classroom management, volunteer management, community engagement, and safe food preparation. Project impacts are carefully tracked, including gardens built, children reached, pounds of produce harvested, and volunteers mobilized.

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA members serving at Journey Home in Hartford have played a critical role in the successful development and launch of an online Universal Housing Application, now being utilized by 25 shelter, housing, and healthcare agencies in the Greater Hartford area. The Universal Housing Application allows a household living in a homeless shelter or other temporary living situation to submit one application to apply to, and assess eligibility for, 33 different housing programs for the homeless across the community. AmeriCorps VISTA members worked with Journey Home staff and the database vendor to develop the online application, test it, train users to work with clients to submit applications through the system, and develop administrative materials to ensure the sustainability and evaluation of the project. While the application is still in the process of ramping up to its maximum usage, it is estimated to eventually result in a smoother, quicker transition to housing for as many as 3,000 individuals who experience homelessness each year in Greater Hartford.

The Connecticut Food Justice Youth Corps VISTA Project has placed 13 AmeriCorps VISTA members at eight community-based organizations in cities and towns throughout central and eastern Connecticut, all with a common goal of developing youth leadership programs to educate and empower opportunity youth about food access and food justice issues. Since the first VISTAs began service in August 2013, VISTA members have supported 75 distinct youth leaders and their respective host sites by developing seven social and food justice curricula, creating 20 events, and raising \$14,000 in cash and in-kind donations. In addition, VISTA members recruited more than 200 volunteers to support the project.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The mission of Connecticut Forest and Park Association (CFPA) is to protect forests, parks, walking trails, and open spaces for future generations by connecting people to the land. CFPA directly involves individuals and families, educators, community leaders, and volunteers to enhance and defend Connecticut's rich natural heritage. The AmeriCorps NCCC members assisted in building a 6-mile trail that will connect across wild and pristine watershed lands that have not been previously open to the public. This work included clearing brush, constructing water crossings, defining trail tread, building a full-bench trail, installing erosion control structures and trail signage, and blazing the trail. The new 6-mile trail connects the Wyantnock State Forest to Shepaug Reservoir lands and north to the Mohawk State Forest. By building this new trail, hikers, walkers, birders, school groups, trail runners and others will have the opportunity to access this diverse and wild area thereby aiding CFPA accomplish its mission of connecting people to the land so they may develop a relationship and appreciation for the outdoors.

The Torrington Area Health District Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is dedicated to improving public awareness in the areas of CPR, heart healthy living skills, and emergency preparedness. The overarching mission of the MRC is to engage volunteers to strengthen public health, emergency response and community resiliency. AmeriCorps NCCC members assisted six land and trust organizations throughout Northwestern CT, by working on existing trails, blazing new trails, removing invasive species, repairing bridges, building board walks, and helping to improve the hiking trails in a number of area preserves. Additionally, they learned and presented the MRC*B*Fit and MRC*B*Ready nutrition education and community preparedness curriculums to summer camps within the Northwestern corner of Connecticut. The work the team accomplished will assist the Torrington Area Health District's MRC to build infrastructure and provide community preparedness education. The land trust storm mitigation and trail blazing will allow for improved access to trails for hikers and emergency responders.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Through a partnership with the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, the Bridgeport Foster Grandparent Program, sponsored by the Child and Family Guidance Center, assigned 25 Foster Grandparents to five Schools of Hope, an initiative designed to improve the educational success of students at select schools in Fairfield County. Foster Grandparents support a multi-faceted program that provides individual support to struggling students, ensures that students have books in the home, and engages parents in literacy skill-building activities with their children. Foster Grandparents receive training in literacy skills with the goal of ensuring that all students are reading at grade level by the third grade. More than 1,000 students have received services through Schools of Hope since it began. A recent evaluation of the program reported that the percentage of students at or above proficiency increased from 58 percent to 72 percent in the targeted schools over a five-year period.

Senior Corps RSVP

Fifty RSVP volunteers serving with the Greater Hartford RSVP project tutored 55 second and third grade students in five public schools during the 2013-2014 school year as part of the America Reads program. Tutors spent one hour a week with each child from October to May. Pre- and post-tests using the Fountas and Pinell Benchmark Assessment System showed that at the end of the school year, 89 percent students had improved their reading scores by at least two reading levels.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Senior Companion Program sponsored by the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut in New Haven has developed a program called "Follow Me Home," designed to assign Senior Companions to frail elderly patients who are returning home upon discharge from a hospitalization. The program was developed in response to a study by the Center for Medicaid and Medicaid Services that showed older hospital patients have a 20 percent readmission rate within the first 30 days after discharge from a hospitalization. The New Haven Senior Companions are assigned to clients to ensure they eat properly, attend follow-up appointments with their physicians, and take their medications as prescribed in the 60 days after a hospitalization. To date, two Senior Companions have been assigned to clients, both of whom remained out of the hospital during the 60-day period following their hospitalization.

Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund transforms lives and communities using limited federal investment as a catalyst to grow the impact of nonprofits with evidence of strong results. It harnesses the expertise of grantmaking intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits and engages funding partners to contribute nearly three dollars to every one federal dollar invested. As the Social Innovation Fund network grows programs that work in Connecticut, more people are able to overcome their most pressing challenges in the areas of economic opportunity, health, and youth development. The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$387,236 in expanding the impact of 2 nonprofits in Connecticut.