

AmeriCorps State

The Idaho Department of Labor Veterans Serving Veterans program engages military veterans as AmeriCorps members to assist returning veterans in southwestern Idaho with employment services such as resume help and job search assistance. They also are creating a veterans' service directory, making referrals to other agencies, and working on community service projects. AmeriCorps member Mike Storm was recognized for his contributions at a recent Boise State University football game.

AmeriCorps member Amanda Argona serving with the Idaho Healthcare for Children and Families AmeriCorps Program is partnering with the University of Idaho Sustainability Center and Campus dietician to provide college students with tips and tools to live a healthy lifestyle. She has assisted the program in teaching students how to food shop on a budget, and how to cook healthy low cost meals.

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA members helped bring about some major accomplishments at the STEP UP Educational Center, a volunteer-run program at Corpus Christi House, a daytime homeless shelter in Boise. The Center assists clients with furthering their education and finding employment. VISTAs strengthened programming by starting a resume writing and interview preparation curriculum and mobilized community volunteers to help clients navigate the Internet, create email accounts, apply for jobs, and write resumes. With VISTA support, the Center now helps clients with interview skills and connects them with resources, such as professional attire and transportation. VISTAs also contributed to sustainability efforts by securing a \$25,000 donation for the STEP UP Center. In 2014, 12 STEP UP participants secured permanent employment and 46 students earn their GED. Five of the GED-recipients currently attend college and continue to receive tutoring and support from the STEP UP Program.

The Idaho Food bank places AmeriCorps VISTA members around the state, where they to help the food bank meet the needs of feed hungry Idahoans. VISTA members cultivate new partnerships; generate funds; set up USDA food compliance policies; and increase attendance to the Cooking Matters, a cooking-based nutrition education program. Through the Cooking Matters, individuals that receive food boxes from local pantries, attend classes to learn how to cook nutritious meals using the items obtained at the food bank. VISTA members recruit volunteer culinary instructors and nutrition experts to classes throughout Idaho. They also coordinate classes, obtain donations, and help expand the program to serve more people in need. The Idaho Food Bank also manages a robust and collaborative VISTA Summer Associate program. Working with the Idaho Commission on Libraries, the food bank placed 25 VISTA Summer Associates at the summer feeding program, Picnic in the Park. In the 10-week program, Summer Associates helped serve 56,036 meals at 27 locations to 1,397 children each week. More than 9,000 children with limited access to reading materials received 3,546 books at 49 library outreach sites.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The mission of the Girl Scouts of Silver Sage Council (SSC) is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place. An AmeriCorps NCCC team served with the Girl Scouts of SSC, where they worked on camp infrastructure projects at their Camp Alice Pittenger in McCall, Idaho. At the camp, the team removed old flooring from the dining lodge and installed new flooring. The team built 15 kayak racks, over thirty tables, a deck measuring 846 square feet and refurbished a total of nine campsites. Additional tasks that the team completed include grinding 120 square feet of a cement patio, fitting 20 electrical sockets in the dining lodge, and maintaining a ropes course by leveling the ground. The team also repaired three environmental education facilities through these activities. The team also spent time in Boise, Idaho serving at the Girl Scouts Administrative Office. At the administrative office in Boise, corps members cleared 500 pounds of brush, planted a dozen plants, and painted a storage shed. The team was also able to write a manual detailing the camp's opening procedures for use by future AmeriCorps NCCC teams.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team served with Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho, through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), a program of the Internal Revenue Service, which is a major federal anti-poverty program supporting the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Program. This program offers direct financial support to low to moderate wage earners and is one of the most successful anti-poverty programs. The team performed outreach to spread awareness of the free tax sites, distributing over 1,500 flyers. Corps members completed 119 returns in three different communities; returning \$198,139 dollars back to tax payers. The team also served with United Way's Bank On initiative, a program developed to increase financial literacy for community members by teaching budgeting and smart money managing. Corps Members also did outreach via phone with thirteen non-profit organizations to introduce the Bank On initiative. The team also served at a Community Day with The Idaho Department of Fish and Game, where they recruited 75 volunteers to plant Sage brush and Bitter brush to repopulate the burnt hills with vegetation for wildlife.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Southeast Foster Grandparent Program in Blackfoot serves 16 rural and frontier counties in the southern region of Idaho. In spite of the isolated service area, the Foster Grandparent Program provides a significant service to both at risk youth and the "grandparents" who serve them. The program has 89 Foster Grandparents who serve 790 children. In the past year volunteers have provided 49,495 hours of service to elementary schools, the state hospital, and juvenile detention center. One young person residing at the juvenile detention center was about to be released and wrote the following letter, "Dear Grandpa and Grandma, Thank you so much for coming and being such a nice and loving persons to my group and me. Even though this is probably the last time I will see you, I will always remember and honor all the things you have taught me. I am so grateful to have had you be my grandma and grandpa. That is just one thing no one else could give me." The Foster Grandparents in Southeast Idaho are teaching life lessons and making impacts on the lives of children and youth each and every day.

Senior Corps RSVP

The Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho's RSVP program boasts a robust volunteer program that makes real impact in the communities it serves. Volunteers in Kootenai County alone have given 163,092 hours of service this year, which is equivalent to 79 years of full-time employment and has an economic impact of \$3.25 million. One of the program's volunteers, Catherine Owen of Silverton, received the Governor's Brightest Star award for her service through the RSVP program. Catherine volunteers to ensure that seniors residing in independent, assisted living and long-term care facilities have access to a friendly visitor on a regular basis. She reads and visits with seniors who do not have a family support system. Catherine is 99 years old and credits her longevity to helping other seniors as it gives her a sense of purpose.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Senior Corps volunteers who serve with the Senior Companion Program make a real difference to individuals, nonprofits, and community organizations in southern Idaho. Senior Companion Donna Lamp is one of them. She has devoted more than 388 hours and driven more than 3,000 miles to help elderly residents in her community. Donna is assigned to eight elderly and homebound people in Buhl, Twin Falls, and surrounding communities and helps them shop for groceries or get to doctor's appointments. Pat Simmons of Twin Falls is one of Donna's clients. Besides getting where she needs to go, Simmons said, she enjoys just sitting and talking with Lamp. "I just enjoy her friendship," said Simmons, whose husband died in 2012. "I enjoy seeing her come to the door." The Senior Companion Program in southern Idaho has 28 volunteers and helps over 150 clients live with dignity in their own homes.