

## AmeriCorps State

More than two years after Superstorm Sandy made landfall in New Jersey, hundreds of families throughout Monmouth County are still rebuilding. United Way is mobilizing the caring power of the community to support individuals and families throughout Monmouth County who are still recovering from the devastation of Superstorm Sandy. United Ways "ReBuild NJ" program gets families back in their homes by leveraging the time, talent and resources of passionate volunteers, AmeriCorps members, corporate and nonprofit partners. AmeriCorps members with ReBuild NJ serve families in the most devastated communities in New Jersey, gaining first-hand experience with disaster recovery, residential construction and project management while leading groups of community volunteers.

## AmeriCorps National

Citizen Schools is a nonprofit organization that partners with middle schools to expand the learning day for children in low-income communities. Citizen Schools mobilizes a team of AmeriCorps educators and volunteers to lead real-world learning projects and provide academic support, helping all students discover and achieve their dreams. In their two years of service, AmeriCorps members serve as "Teaching Fellows," providing students with months of extra learning through academic mentoring and skill-building apprenticeships that translates into college readiness and career opportunities. Citizen Schools has been recognized as a leader in engaging volunteers, generating student impact, and balancing direct service with systemic change efforts. A longitudinal study found that former Citizen Schools participants graduated from high school within four years at a rate of 71 percent, compared to 59 percent among matched peers, and internal analyses have found that 61 percent of Citizen Schools' alumni enroll in college.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA is a vital asset to long-term disaster recovery in New Jersey. This past year, the New Jersey Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (VOAD) and NJ 2-1-1 partnered to sponsor the First Call for Help VISTA project. NY 2-1-1 is an information and referral line and website that connects people to social services. The project focuses on Hurricane Sandy recovery and on building New Jersey's resilience by strengthening local capacity to prepare and respond to disasters. VISTAs support statewide efforts and collaborate with local partners in Atlantic, Bergen, Camden, Essex, Mercer, Middlesex, and Monmouth counties. VISTAs helped establish three new local VOADs and Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs), reconvene another VOAD, and improve the infrastructure of five other VOADs. VISTAs conducted membership outreach, created a resource directory, and trained the groups to communicate better to assist communities to prepare and respond before, during, and after disaster. This past year, VISTAs helped New Jersey's disaster response and recovery community reach more than 24,000 community members through social media, marketing materials, and presentations at more than 35 events.

The New Jersey Law and Education Empowerment Project (NJ LEEP) empowers youth from underserved neighborhoods to greater educational achievement by combining law-related education with college access programming. The majority of youth served by NJ LEEP are from low to moderate-income families and possess multiple risk factors to achieve matriculation. AmeriCorps VISTA has been critical in expanding and strengthening NJ LEEP's programming by developing training, curriculum, evaluation practices, and data management systems. VISTAs helped expand communication strategies to engage stakeholders including developing parent support workshops. VISTAs supported fundraising through grant writing and by creating systems to research, write and report on fundraising opportunities. One hundred percent of NJ LEEP's first four College Bound Program graduating classes (2011-2014) have gained college admission, with 94 percent gaining admission to four year colleges. The New York Life Foundation awarded NJ LEEP the 2014 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Award for outstanding summer programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development.

## AmeriCorps NCCC

AmeriCorps NCCC teams served with Jersey Cares on three separate occasions during 2014. Corps members who served with Jersey Cares focused on rehabilitating homes devastated by Hurricane Sandy. Teams assisted with volunteer management on various construction projects. Corps members managed thousands of volunteers in disaster services. In addition, AmeriCorps NCCC members repaired storm-ravaged homes by framing, applying spackle, sanding, painting, installing drywall, insulation, and flooring. Teams also removed 40,000 lbs. of debris and demolishing rooms. During their service with Jersey Cares, teams worked on over twenty homes. Jersey Cares first became an AmeriCorps NCCC project sponsor in 2013.

## AmeriCorps NCCC Cont'd

Camden Children's Garden March 7-April 30, 2014

The Camden Children's Garden is a branch of the Camden City Garden Club. The Camden City Garden Club is a non-profit organization that promotes community gardening, provides at-risk-youth with job training, and educational programming for children and adults.

AmeriCorps NCCC members' service with Camden City Garden Club was multi-faceted. Corps members worked alongside staff to help repaint buildings and various exhibits around the garden. The team spent a significant amount of time in community gardens in Camden. They removed old plants, weeds, trash and debris. The team also built new beds for plants, added woodchips and compost, and planted various vegetables, fruits, and tubers, and also watered and cared for the plants.

The project in Camden was especially significant as the city has vast poverty and there is a great deal of food insecurity. Corps members also taught elementary and middle school students about nutrition, how to start their own gardens, and the vices of sugar consumption. Camden City garden club first became an AmeriCorps NCCC project sponsor in 2006.

## Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Our Lady of Lourdes Health Foundation sponsors the Foster Grandparent Program serving Camden. The Association for Children for New Jersey reports that more than 20 percent of children in the City of Camden are living in poverty. It is estimated that 60 percent of the more than 4,000 children enrolled in day care throughout Camden City and County have special or exceptional needs. These children are in danger of falling behind in their social emotional, physical, and cognitive development. In the last year, 46 Foster Grandparents served more than 138 children with special or exceptional need at 18 different sites throughout the county. The dedicated Foster Grandparents engage the preschoolers one-on-one in developing important skills in language, pre-reading, letter and number identification, and following directions as well as encourage the children to develop social and age appropriate interactions with peers. This development is critical to helping ensure a strong start to Kindergarten. Ninety percent of the children aged 3-6 served by the Foster Grandparents demonstrated improvement in language development, gross motor and cognitive development skills.

## Senior Corps RSVP

Northwest New Jersey Community Action Partnership has been serving low income communities for more than four decades. Each year, through the RSVP program, they mobilize 930 volunteers across five counties to serve in programs that help meet critical health, economic, and educational needs for seniors, low income families, and children. For example, in 2014, 70 RSVP volunteers were trained in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program and prepared more than 3,100 tax returns for seniors, people with disabilities, and low income community members. The free tax preparation services, offered at 20 sites, resulted in more than \$1.2 million of tax credits filed. More than half of that amount represents Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) filed on behalf of low-income community members. In addition to the tax credits, the services provided by RSVP volunteers were estimated to save community members more than \$325,000 in tax preparation fees.

## Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

In Essex and Hudson Counties, the Salvation Army Newark Area Services has mobilized 79 Senior Companion volunteers to provide companionship for homebound seniors. In the past year, Senior Companions provided more than 80,000 hours to ensure that more than 260 homebound and older adults are able to live independently. The Senior Companions provide caretaker respite services, companionship, and assistance with a variety of tasks that ensure homebound and senior adults are able to continue living in their homes. The program also offers many unique opportunities for volunteers and the clients they serve including disaster preparedness training for both the volunteers and the clients. Furthermore, the program's rich diversity allows Senior Companions to serve Spanish- and Russian-only speakers. The Senior Companions provide their clients with informal ESL instruction and American cultural immersion activities. The home companionship and social intervention the program allows for plays an important role in both improving the quality of life of the beloved clients as well as prolonging their independence and forestalling premature and expensive institutionalization.

## 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 New Jersey, 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 \$418,586 in expanding the impact of four nonprofits in New Jersey.