

AmeriCorps VISTA

Seven AmeriCorps VISTA members sponsored by Volunteers of America served at five nonprofit organizations. Their collective impact for the last quarter of 2013 includes:

- 323 volunteers managed by VISTAS provided 2,443 hours of service to their agencies.
- \$129,424 cash and \$16,032 worth of in-kind contributions were raised with the help of VISTAS.
- 3,658 children benefited from educational services supported by VISTAS.
- 28 veterans received support as a result of VISTA efforts.

VISTA member serving with the Boys and Girls Club in Pierre through the Volunteers of America, Dakotas Program has started a program called the Torch Club. The Torch Club is a community based program, with youth from the ages of 10 to 16 who focus on making a difference in their community through service. Some activities that have been completed are: cleaning up the stream around the club, removing the trash in the water and on the grounds. Also included were trips to a senior center where the youth provided seniors' assistance with hair and manicures as well as companionship and games such as chess and bingo.

AmeriCorps NCCC

Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota cares for, supports and strengthens individuals, families and communities. During the summer of 2014, two AmeriCorps NCCC teams served with Lutheran Social Services following a devastating tornado and flood. The team responding to the flood served 25 homes in Lincoln and Union Counties where they mucked and gutted homes, which resulted in the removal of 5,000 pounds of wood, insulation, wood paneling, and dry wall debris. In addition, the team removed washed up corn husks, fencing, and removing sandbags used to protect structure during the flood. The team was also able to hasten the arrival of assistance for South Dakota homeowners, by organizing the contact information for volunteers, organizations, and homeowners. The NCCC team that served with Lutheran Social Services in tornado recovery cleaned 160,000 pounds of debris from 52 properties. Corps members created a 20 minute film for Lutheran Social Services that detailed the disaster recovery efforts for the tornado. The team also helped coordinate 50 volunteers, who responded to the tornado. Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota first became an AmeriCorps NCCC sponsor in 2011.

Fort Sisseton was established in 1864 to ensure safe passage for settlers, surveyors, and others in the Dakota Territory. It joined the state park system in 1959. In 2014, the Fort celebrated its 150th anniversary. From 1984-2007, the site undertook massive conservation and preservation efforts to successfully preserve the sites' 14 remaining historic structures and collections. Almost seven years later, the structures are in need of paint, basic preventative preservation efforts, and deep cleaning. Additionally, the exhibits must be systematically cleaned and exhibit items inventoried. An AmeriCorps NCCC team assisted with these tasks in preparation for the 150th Anniversary Celebration. They scraped, painted and deep cleaned 11 of the 14 buildings at the Fort. They removed debris and leaves from 800 feet of gutters, cleaned 18 Fort signs, and installed a new floating floor. In addition, they inventoried 510 items and uploaded 445 photos to the inventory tracking system. Fort Sisseton first became a sponsor in 2014.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Black Hills Special Services Coop Foster Grandparent Program supported 36 Foster Grandparent volunteers who provided tutoring to 646 elementary school students across western South Dakota last year. According to surveys completed by classroom teachers, more than 80 percent of students served by Foster Grandparents showed improved literacy. Foster Grandparents focused on reading and literacy and helped beginning readers with basic skills. Additionally, they served as an attentive, helpful audience to assist older readers with gaining more experience and understanding. The volunteers worked with many children whose families do not encourage reading at home. Additionally, the volunteers themselves experienced numerous benefits as a result of volunteering: 88 percent of volunteers said they noticed increased health benefits, 97 percent said volunteering increased their self-esteem and overall sense of well-being, and 97 percent said their stipend helped them continue to live independently or maintain their current level of independence.

Senior Corps RSVP

When tornadoes devastated residents in communities in Nebraska and South Dakota, the South Central South Dakota RSVP jumped into action. Working from the RSVP program's office in Yankton, RSVP volunteers partnered with the Yankton United Way to conduct a disaster drive for the victims. United Way staff researched the needs in each area and RSVP volunteers and other local volunteers were the driving force to collect hundreds of cases of sport drinks and snacks to be transported to the affected areas. RSVP volunteers manned disaster drive tables at the local grocery store and shoppers generously contributed hundreds of cases of sport drinks and snacks. RSVP volunteers also baked dozens of baked goods for the tornado survivors. Eight RSVP volunteers manned the disaster drive tables for two days to receive the goods. United Way staff and volunteers transported the donated items to the tornado stricken areas to the north and south of Yankton. The power of great organizations, teamwork and a generous community made a difference in the wake of disaster.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society Senior Companion Program serves all of South Dakota. In 2013, the program supported 113 Senior Companions who served 69,845 hours with 513 frail older adults. Senior Companions assisted with basic activities such as light housekeeping, meal preparation, shopping, transportation for groceries and medical appointments, reading and paying bills, and providing emergency information. This support allowed the clients to stay in their homes and live independently. Of the 475 clients receiving in-home services, 82.5 percent were able to remain in their homes six or more months. These home services allow clients to delay nursing home placement, thereby benefiting from a better quality of life and providing cost savings to the clients, their family members, and taxpayers. Furthermore, Senior Companions also provided weekly scheduled respite care to 38 caregivers. When surveyed, 96 percent of these caregivers indicated that they felt less stress and worry because of these visits. Eighty-five percent agreed that they have the support and resources needed to continue caregiving for at least six additional months.