

AmeriCorps State

Front Steps' Keep Austin Housed (KAH) places 31 AmeriCorps members annually across nine different agencies that serve the homeless community in Austin. Finding affordable housing for low-income households is essential to establishing self-sufficiency and stability. Housing clients is difficult when factoring in one's credit history, criminal history, lack of education, mental illness, and substance abuse. KAH AmeriCorps members are an efficient and effective solution. Serving 40 hours a week, AmeriCorps members have the dedicated time to learn the agency, local resources, and case management skills that are necessary when working directly with homeless clients. Members work with clients to set and accomplish goals related to housing and income, teach life skills classes, and help clients develop necessary independent living skills. Additionally, KAH AmeriCorps members recruit and support volunteers that complete a wide variety of tasks such as taking clients to medical appointments or to the grocery store. These volunteer hours allow staff to focus on tasks that require their clinical skills and expertise.

College Forward (CF), an Austin-based college access and college completion AmeriCorps program, dramatically increases college success rates for low-income Texans. With a single goal -- a postsecondary credential for every student -- College Forward provides intensive mentoring for low-income and first-generation students whose education, without CF's intervention, would most likely end with high school. The program matches economically disadvantaged high school and college students with 73 AmeriCorps members who provide intensive coaching, mentoring, and motivation to ensure students go to college, thrive, and graduate. Following an innovative, data-informed curriculum and milestones, backed by one of the most sophisticated student databases in the postsecondary world, CF AmeriCorps members address the challenges that students encounter during the process of applying, enrolling, paying for, persisting through, and finally succeeding in higher education. The program has grown from serving 30 students in 2003 to more than 5,500 students from the Austin and Houston regions at 16 Texas high schools and more than 115 colleges across the nation. To date, 99.5% of College Forward students apply and gain admission to college, 90% of CF students enter college within 12 months of high school graduation, and 47% earn bachelor's degrees by age 24, a six-fold increase over the Texas average for demographically-similar students.

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

Baylor University partnered with the City of West, Texas for a very successful AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associates program during summer 2014. In April 2013, West was devastated by a fertilizer plant explosion that caused 15 deaths, destroyed 150 buildings (including West's schools and nursing home) and caused more than \$100 million in damage. Twenty-one recent high school graduates, the majority of whom were from West High School, served a total of 6,511 hours and completed 10 projects during the ten-week service period. To foster economic development in West, the Summer Associates refurbished the Historic West Museum, created a database of the historical artifacts in the Katy Depot, and updated the West Chamber of Commerce's website. To serve the students affected by the explosion, the Summer Associates also assisted with a free summer camp for K-6 graders currently enrolled in West Independent School District. "West Best Smart Kid Camp", as it was named, focused on math and language arts. At West Elementary School, the Summer Associates sorted, catalogued and shelved 3,000 books donated by the Texas Senior Corps Association for children's use in the coming school year.

Texas Impact is a statewide grassroots network whose members include individuals, congregations, and governing bodies of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths in Texas. A key component of the agency is the Community Partner Program, a Texas Health and Human Service Commission supported project enabling local faith-based and nonprofit organizations to better help low-income Texans improve their lives. Thirty AmeriCorps VISTA members serving across the state have assisted more than 350 of these organizations through recruitment events, volunteer trainings, and support services to better equip Community Partner organizations with the knowledge they need to assist low-income families and individuals in their communities. The biggest contribution is their regional creation of volunteer training modules and dedication to alleviating poverty at the local level. They are very proud and grateful for their collective work across the state and could not have reached any program goals without AmeriCorps VISTAs on their team.

AmeriCorps NCCC

"Mission: Border Hope" is a faith based nonprofit organization residing in Eagle Pass, TX in a border community. Border Hope requested an AmeriCorps NCCC team to assist construction volunteer groups in the rehabilitation of many of homes in Maverick County due to massive flooding. The team's mission was to work on individual survivor's homes by mucking and gutting, installing drywall, taping and floating, molding and installing new sheetrock, strengthening support beams, and performing roof repairs. In doing this, they were able to improve the homes and provide safe and dry quarters for the affected individuals. In all, Corps Members completed roof repairs on eleven homes, mucked, gutted and installed drywall on six homes, completing fifteen homes and seventeen projects in total. The benefits to the community of Eagle Pass, TX due to the teams direct impact are immense. Maverick County is the second most impoverished county in Texas and the ninth most impoverished county in the country. The NCCC team was able to put the name of Eagle Pass, TX and Maverick County on the map as a place of need.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team partnered with Ecology Action to turn a retired landfill into a natural space the community could utilize. Ecology Action's mission is to create a healthier environment through resource recovery operations, Brownfield remediation and zero waste initiatives. The team worked to pick up 10,500 pounds of litter, vegetation, and stone and brick debris, some of which they repurposed for use on other projects. In working at Circle Acres, the team created 4 new trails, installed water bars, built benches, and installed a heavy-duty metal fence. At the Ecology Action recycling center and in the community, the team sorted and separated thousands of pounds of litter and bailed 35 tons of these items to be sent off and recycled. NCCC Corps members also placed "no dumping" plaques on 200 storm drains and worked to restore a historical cemetery in the Montopolis neighborhood. Additionally, the team helped a neighboring non-profit Earth Share move into a new office. The work the NCCC team completed with Ecology Action has benefitted the surrounding community immensely and will continue to impact the community even after the team is gone.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Ft. Bliss Child Development Centers serve military families in El Paso. Many of the children served have adjustment problems due to disruptions caused by the military service of one or more parent. Also, most of the children are not from the area, so there is limited extended familial support. To help, the City of El Paso Foster Grandparent Program has volunteers at two of the Ft. Bliss centers, serving more than 600 military families annually. Fifteen Foster Grandparents provide nurturing support, play therapy, and model appropriate behavior to their assigned children. These Foster Grandparents are stable adults that provide consistent loving attention to children that may be far away from their own extended family. One of the Foster Grandparents serving at Ft. Bliss is Ms. Consuelo Gomez. A Foster Grandparent volunteer since 1983, she has been at Fort Bliss for more than 20 years. Ms. Gomez is just one example of why the City of El Paso Foster Grandparent Program is making a difference in the lives of military families at Ft. Bliss.

Senior Corps RSVP

Runningwater Draw RSVP in Plainview, Texas received the Governor's 2014 Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Award for Best Family Program for its "My Dad Reads to Me" program. The RSVP program was nominated for the award by the Warden at the Formby and J.B. Wheeler Prison Units. At an award ceremony in Austin, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Executive Director spoke about the great work that RSVP volunteers were doing in the prison: "These men and women give their time not for monetary reward," said Livingston, "They volunteer because they have a personal passion in seeing others succeed. We are grateful for their selfless dedication." RSVP volunteers meet with fathers in prison to read and record books for their children along with a message of love and encouragement. RSVP volunteers have recorded and mailed 2,480 books for 391 fathers and 770 children. Follow up surveys from the children's guardians show improvements in reading skills, self-esteem, and strengthened family ties after reading along with their father's recording of a book. Incarcerated fathers also showed improved reading skills and increased self-esteem.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

After earning her BS in Education, Ms. Bernita Aldridge spent her career with the Dallas Independent School District and later the Boys and Girls Club. After triple bypass surgery in 2010, losing her vision to glaucoma in 2011, and losing her caregiver in 2013, Ms. Aldridge was at risk of having to move to a nursing home. She was very concerned about falling while alone or being taken advantage of by letting the wrong person into her home. In February 2013, the Parkland Hospital geriatrics social worker referred Ms. Aldridge to the Senior Source Senior Companion Program. Soon after, Senior Companion volunteer Sara Cooper started visiting her in her home. Since then, Ms. Aldridge has been able to live in her own home while allowing her daughter to continue working full time. When talking about her Senior Companion, Ms. Aldridge said: "I test my blood sugar for my diabetes and Ms. Cooper reads it to me to let me know if it's in the normal range. She lets me know if visitors are friends or stranger and looks out for me in other ways, too. She signed me up for transportation to doctors' appointments so I don't always have to rely on someone else."

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 Texas, 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 \$915,334 in expanding the impact of eight nonprofits in Texas.

Volunteer Generation Fund

New in 2014, OneStar Foundation, the Texas State Service Commission, shifted its Volunteer Generation Fund focus from providing general capacity building and infrastructure support to getting more volunteer “boots on the ground” to help Texas meet critical community needs. Under the new Texas Disaster Volunteer Generation Initiative (TDVGI), OneStar and its partners are working to strengthen the State of Texas’ ability to harness the potential of unaffiliated, spontaneous and other community volunteers generated in times of disaster through increasing the capacity of volunteer connector organizations and their partners. The project benefits from OneStar’s strategic, cross-sector partnerships with the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (TX VOAD), the Texas Association of Volunteer Centers (TAVC), and the University of Texas at Austin’s RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service (UT RGK). OneStar selected four grantees to implement best practices related to volunteer recruitment and management, build strategic partnerships with local governments and emergency management officials, and develop high-quality disaster volunteers/assignments to help Texas generate and retain an unprecedented number of volunteers available in times of disaster.