

## AmeriCorps State

The University of Virginia launched the VA College Advising Corps (VCAC) in 2005 as a public service program to address the widening gap in college access for low income, first generation, and underrepresented students. VCAC is a joint venture of the University of Virginia, College Advising Corps, and AmeriCorps. VCAC's mission is to increase the number of these students entering and completing higher education. VCAC accomplishments since 2005 include 131,564 one-on-one appointments with students; 20,472 classroom visits and workshops; 9,982 meetings with parents; 3,937 campus tours; 8,818 FAFSAs completed; and more than 10,000 students enrolled in post-secondary institutions. The program became the model for the national College Advising Corps, now present in 14 states and 423 high schools. In 2013-2014, Advisers helped to bring \$6,984,885 in institutional aid and \$1,756,472 in scholarships to students throughout Virginia. This program has experienced increases in college matriculation in the vast majority of partner high schools, with results ranging from 2 percent to 14 percent between 2008-2012 graduates. This amounts to thousands of students who have continued on to post-secondary education.

The Alternatives PASS program provides academic enrichment activities to at-risk, low income Pre K-8 students in Hampton. This afterschool program includes mentoring, homework assistance, and instruction in enrichment curricula that focuses on math, science, and English. The program exceeded output and outcome targets by serving 1,046 students, of whom 411 increased their academic scores and demonstrated improvement in behavior. The average daily attendance in exceeded the national average and 56.25 percent of middle school students attending at least 70 percent of the program passed their Math Standard of Learning exam. In 2014, Alternatives began the PASS for Learning AmeriCorps Program, which provides mentoring, pro-social skill building, and academic enrichment activities to more than 1,000 elementary students in four low-performing schools in Hampton and Newport News. AmeriCorps members serve during the school day to assist teachers, build relationships, facilitate team building activities, provide instruction in enrichment curricula, and support literacy activities targeting non-English speaking families. Alternatives also promotes sustainability by developing partnerships with corporate sponsors.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, an AmeriCorps VISTA intermediary, supports nonprofit organizations and university-based community outreach efforts to better address the needs of those in poverty in the New River Valley. VISTAs are building robust volunteer networks to support school readiness, post-secondary success, and home rehabilitation, and building the capacity of area hunger and homelessness relief programs. A VISTA at the Smart Beginnings program is increasing community involvement in early childhood development and school readiness by implementing Volunteer Reading Programs in area day care centers. Mentors read one-on-one with children weekly to aid in their vocabulary development and social skills. This program is rapidly expanding to include 10 AmeriCorps members, 100 reading mentors, and 100 children in 20 centers. Another VISTA is implementing an afterschool Mobile Makerspace program to bring STEM activities to 20 children in two low-income housing complexes. The Maker experiences, led by community volunteers, are designed to increase creativity, improve academic engagement, and strengthen interest and abilities in STEM subjects.

Richmond, Virginia's CARITAS VISTA project had a Performance Milestone to recruit, train, and place 40 new volunteers. What they didn't expect was an additional volunteer coordination event in August due to a generous donation from Ikea. The Ikea Life Improvement Challenge is a national initiative for employees and customers to vote on-line for the charity they feel should receive \$10,000 in Ikea products, services, and in-kind donations. CARITAS' long-term addiction treatment facility and shelter, The Healing Place, was selected as this year's winner. The VISTA recruited a robust team of volunteers to work alongside six workers (carpenter, interior designers, and builders) from Ikea's Woodbridge store to assemble and install wardrobe closets, shelves, window coverings and new flat-screen televisions in three peer mentors rooms. CARITAS has successfully surpassed the Targets in all Performance Milestones: recruiting more than 200 volunteers; raising more than \$9,000 in a 36-hour online giving campaign The Amazing Raise; and developing a communications plan to increase social media by 38 percent.

## AmeriCorps NCCC

An AmeriCorps NCCC team partnered with the National Wildlife Refuge System in Suffolk, VA, to help make the Great Dismal Swamp more accessible to tourists and clear the Black Bay of invasive species. The National Wildlife Refuge System administers a national network of land and waterways for the conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generation of Americans. The team spent the majority of the project site constructing 200 feet of boardwalk through the marsh. The team gathered the appropriate resources and tools necessary to build the boardwalk and toured the swamp. The team built the beginning of a boardwalk for handicapped hunters that will help those in wheelchairs participate in the annual deer and bear hunts as well as serve as a natural walk loop for non-hunters. The team also completed a project in Black Bay to encourage the growth of natural tree species in the area by removing non-native species. The team worked with handsaws, loppers and chainsaws to cut down trees including pine, maple, and sweet gum from a 25 acre plot within the bay.

## AmeriCorps NCCC Cont'd

Two AmeriCorps NCCC teams, in partnership with Easter Seals USP North Carolina & Virginia helped serve as counselors, cabin leaders, and program staff for a camp for individuals with special needs. The mission of Easter Seals USP North Carolina & Virginia is to create opportunities, promote individual choice and change the lives of children and adults with disabilities by maximizing their individual potential for living, learning and working in their communities. The NCCC Team spent five weeks working with Camp Easter Seals, UCP providing direct, hands-on support as camp counselors to campers. They helped run a performing arts camp session, put on a plan and dance for camper's parents, and undertook roles such as friend, caretaker, or confidant, for the diverse groups of disabled individuals. The team was responsible for caring for, protecting the safety of, and encouraging their campers to experience everything that camp had to offer. Corps members worked over 90 hours each week and in providing these services, benefited the camp as a whole by adding summer staff and value to the camp without increasing the cost to a prohibitive level for the campers.

## Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. has sponsored the Foster Grandparent Program in the Central Appalachian Mountain region of Southwest Virginia for the past 17 years. The service area ranks in the bottom 13 percent of Virginia counties in per capita income and has a median family income no greater than 67 percent of the U.S. average. Many families cannot provide their children with the proper educational opportunities, causing them to be behind upon entering school. The Foster Grandparent Program is meeting the educational needs of Head Start and children in K-2 grades so they can reach their potential. Twenty seven Foster Grandparents provided one on one tutoring and support to more than 85 students developing personal relationships, and assisting with language, letter and number recognition, writing, and the social skills they need to be successful. Results indicate that 82 percent of K-2 grade students with Foster Grandparents' support passed to the next grade and 100 percent of Head Start students moved on to the next level.

## Senior Corps RSVP

Montgomery County Board of Supervisors RSVP Program's engages 230 volunteers to serve the cities of Christiansburg and Blacksburg and surrounding rural communities in southwestern Virginia. RSVP volunteers often work side-by-side with VA Tech college students in many initiatives, including providing services at emergency food banks and packing/distributing food for weekend backpack programs. A few achievements in the past six months include 50 RSVPs providing the manpower to operate two thrift stores to raise \$88,942; 193 low income seniors received tax preparation services from seven RSVP volunteers; and 33 caregivers were provided respite care by nine RSVPs. Montgomery County RSVPs frequently collaborate with two other RSVP programs in neighboring counties (New River Community Action RSVP and Pulaski County RSVP) on initiatives such as Supplies for Seniors (collecting toiletries and food items for delivery on MLK Day) and providing transportation to veterans for medical service and special recognition events at the Veterans Hospital 30 miles away in Salem.

## Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Senior Companion Program, sponsored by Clinch Valley Community Action Inc., has been providing respite services to caregivers and community based in-home services to clients in rural southwest Virginia for more than 25 years. The service area lacks night, weekend, and rural area public transportation systems, making consistent transportation a major barrier for those citizens who do not drive or have their own vehicle. The Senior Companion Program is the only organized senior volunteer program in the service area that provides trained, consistent, and reliable companions. Volunteers provide clients with companionship, light housekeeping, transportation, meal preparation, medication reminders, shopping, respite care, and more. Last year, 41 Senior Companions served 106 clients with a combined contribution of 45,030 hours of service to their community. Of the clients that responded to a survey to measure the impact of the Senior Companions' services, 92 percent reported that they were able to continue living independently at home due to the services received by the Senior Companion Program.

## 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 Vermont, 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 \$274,072 in expanding the impact of two nonprofits in Virginia.