

AmeriCorps State

The Washington Service Corps, a statewide intermediary, engaged 570 AmeriCorps members in service throughout Washington state including rural underserved areas with limited capacity and resources. A few highlights from the 2013-2014 program year are noted. AmeriCorps members trained more than 66,000 individuals on personal disaster preparedness with 53,000 reporting an increase in knowledge and confidence in responding to a disaster. In the area of education, 9,703 students completed K-12 academic support programs supported by AmeriCorps members. Of the students served, 91 percent improved by at least one benchmark. More than 36,000 individuals were trained on energy efficiency and environmentally conscious practices and more than 14,000 individuals participated in health education opportunities. AmeriCorps members engaged 788 veterans in volunteer projects and days of service and 61 percent planned to return for additional volunteer opportunities.

The Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) provided meaningful service and training opportunities to 272 young adults (ages 18-25) and military veterans through field crews and individual placement positions helping to protect and restore the environment. The WCC operates one of the larger AmeriCorps disaster response units which responds to local and national disasters. Among their notable accomplishments during the 2013-2014 program year, 1,754 acres of public and tribal land were improved through projects such as installing native trees and shrubs, removing invasive species, and creating or improving trails. AmeriCorps members also responded to three major disasters including local flash flooding, local wildfires, and the federally declared SR530 landslide in Oso, Washington.

AmeriCorps VISTA

In April 2014, United Way of King County hosted the Community Resource Exchange, a day devoted to connecting people experiencing homelessness with immediate access to services and resources. Attendees enjoyed a hot meal, access to free health and dental services, haircuts, voicemail accounts, referrals to employment training and public benefits, housing assistance, foot massages, and more. AmeriCorps VISTA Dontay Proctor-Mills coordinated the event, engaging more than 100 service providers and 600 volunteers to serve neighbors experiencing homelessness. He partnered with Starbucks and others to coordinate 53 supply drives at businesses, schools, and community groups, and to spread the word about the event. He also organized groups of volunteers to assemble more than 2,000 care packages that included shoes, socks, and assorted hygiene items. The Community Resource Exchange attracted more than 1,500 community members experiencing homelessness for a day of hope and help.

Often the impacts of the capacity building provided by AmeriCorps VISTA members are not truly seen until after the members have completed their service. One example of this is the Washington State Division of Child Support's Alternative Solutions Program. This program was designed to assist low income, non-custodial parents that struggle to meet their child support obligations by linking them to resources in order to help overcome financial barriers to meeting obligations. Four VISTA members spent months researching, planning, developing partnerships, building a referral system, and training staff to utilize the new system. Now DCS staff state-wide can access a database of resources for clients. One of the first parents to receive assistance shared; "I was feeling overwhelmed with child support. With all of the help I received from this new program, I not only got the help I needed, but my broken relationship with my wife was restored. My children now have a dad and my family is free to move ahead." The program has already been resolving cases and just mere months after their July 2014 launch has 300 open cases. All of this has become possible because of VISTA.

AmeriCorps NCCC

King County Parks is a large system including 25,000 acres of land in 180 parks with 175 miles of regional trails and 130 miles of hiking trails. Nature trails and areas are greatly utilized in the State of Washington, particularly in populated King County. During the winter of 2014, an AmeriCorps NCCC team served with King County Parks, where the team worked on park restoration at thirteen different parks throughout King County. In addition, Blue Three removed invasive species from three acres of park property. Throughout the project, the team planted over 10,000 trees and native plants. After planting a wide range of trees from willow stakes to potted trees, the team was able to harvest and pot over 1,300 trees. The team's time harvesting and potting trees helped prepare King County Parks for future planting events and brought the team's service with the restoration full circle. During their time in Washington, the team supervised 546 volunteers during weekly volunteer events. Corps members assisted teachers at Tolt Middle School with many different tasks from grading papers to leading reading groups with over 200 students.

Northwest Trek Wildlife Park is dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. This 725-acre park is home to more than 200 animals native to the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada. The AmeriCorps NCCC team revamped the entry way of the wildlife park by stripping two tons of sod and replacing it with 11 tons of soil, added 250 native plants and trees, topped with 2.5 tons of mulch. The team also removed five pounds of trash while revamping the entryway. The team planted 31 trees along park limits to hide unwanted scenery, reconstructed two rock walls, and replaced an old deck in order to enhance the natural experience for visitors. In the Core Animal Care Department and Free Roam Animal Care Department, the team removed over ten tons of substrate from animal habitats and replaced it with 12.6 tons of new substrate. The team inventoried and stored animal crates and added rock and sand to holding units. Members also participated in workshop and craft activities with children. The team finished their service with maintenance by pulling 300 pounds of weeds from 2,000 feet of fencing.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Catholic Community Services' Foster Grandparent Program with University District Youth Center provides homeless, at risk, runaway, and/or street involved youth ages 13-22 support in transitioning to improved living through a variety of services. As a Foster Grandparent, "Bob James is a mentor, coach, and positive role model for all youth that come through the doors at UDYC. Bob is part of the team that greets each youth when they enter the program for the day and assists in getting them welcomed and situated." Bob spends two afternoons a week teaching gardening and employment skills. He uses this time to build strong relationships with individual youths and have meaningful conversations. Bob consistently displays a genuine care when working with street youth, a population that can be hard to reach. Youth immediately trust Bob and believe that he is sincere. "The space that Bob creates through gardening allows for some youth to share and open up that wouldn't otherwise. The safety they feel to talk about wanting a better future builds a strong foundation for growth, lasting change, and self-sufficiency/actualization."

Senior Corps RSVP

RSVP of North Central Washington, a program of the Chelan Douglas Community Action Council, serves six counties in North Central Washington. RSVP volunteers work with local faith-based organizations to provide weekend food to hungry school-age students in the Wenatchee and East Wenatchee area. Starting with two congregations matched with two local elementary schools, the Packing Friendship program, with the support of RSVP, has grown over the past year and a half to 18 congregations serving 18 elementary schools, providing food to approximately 325 students each week. Participating congregations collect food donations from their members and volunteers pack bags of food for needy students in local elementary schools. RSVP has facilitated the recruitment of congregations, matching congregations with local elementary schools, and recruiting volunteers to participate in the program. The program has created new sources of food for the community, new volunteers, and new collaborations between RSVP, local faith-based organizations, and local schools.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The King County Senior Companion Program, sponsored by Volunteers of America - Western Washington, matched a Senior Companion named Chick with a client named Elsie. Elsie is an 85 year old woman who has been blind for the last 15 – 20 years. Despite being blind for a number of years, Elsie had not found time or energy to learn Braille. With the encouragement of her Senior Companion, she started taking Braille classes and has learned how to read Braille. They go to the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library together and read or listen to books on tape. Chick has also benefited by being a Senior Companion to Elsie. Because of his passion for serving seniors, he participated in the Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, and is now a LTC Ombudsman. During the time that Elsie and Chick have been paired together, Elsie has had several major falls resulting in hospitalization and rehab. Because of the assistance she receives from Chick, she has been able to recover quickly and return home. Chick has helped make her home safer and advocated for her to get a medical alert device so she will always be able to get help when she needs it.

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 Washington, 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 \$500,915 in expanding the impact of four nonprofits in Washington.

Volunteer Generation Fund

The Volunteer Generation Fund in Washington state is strengthening volunteer centers through planning and capacity building, enabling replication of successful programs and engagement models. A state plan for service has been developed. The vision is to create an effective volunteer ecosystem that enables volunteers to address the needs of communities. Through the Volunteer Generation Fund, the All Can Serve project has created emergency preparedness plans at a dozen low-income housing properties in the greater Seattle area that are owned and operated by the Low Income Housing Institute. In March, 2014, a Volunteer Reception Center management plan designed through the VGF grant was put into action when a mud slide occurred in the town of Oso, Washington. When donations began arriving, and volunteers poured into Oso carrying their shovels and wanting to help find survivors, pre-trained volunteer leaders were there to man two VRC stations, and ensure that volunteers were properly clothed and protected, as well as their legal rights assured.