

AmeriCorps State

Energy Express engages 500 AmeriCorps members in an eight week summer reading and nutrition program located in low income and rural communities throughout West Virginia. The program is designed to slow or stop the "summer slide" which occurs in low income homes and communities throughout the state. This past summer, AmeriCorps members served at 74 sites in 37 counties. Members served more than 3,000 students entering grades 1-6. Members also sent 20,028 take home books home with the children and provided them with 139,520 meals through the USDA. The meals provides 58 percent of their daily nutritional requirements. A total of 73 percent of children in the program qualified for free and reduced breakfast and lunch during the school year. Significant increases were seen in letter-word recognition, reading fluency, passage comprehension and broad reading. This past summer children attending Energy Express showed a 1.9 month increase in Broad Reading Achievement. Also, 63.2 percent of enrolled students who completed participation maintained or increased their reading achievement scores.

Program Name: AmeriCorps on the Frontline Geographic Location: West Virginia Members: 35 Halftime Year-round Members AmeriCorps on the Frontline of School Success mentors at-risk middle school students to improve attendance, behavior and course performance 35 members served at sites in eleven counties: Cabell, Doddridge, Kanawha, Lincoln, McDowell, Monongalia, Monroe, Pleasants, Pocahontas, Raleigh and Randolph. Recently, a program participant named Matt was called to court as a follow up to his behavior infraction that caused him to be expelled. The judge informed him that he had improved his behavior so dramatically during the year that he did not need to appear again in court. At the end of the court appearance, the student turned around and said, "This is my mentor, Amanda, and she is helping me turn my life around."

AmeriCorps VISTA

The Step By Step West Virginia Dreamers VISTA project serves a five county area in southeastern West Virginia. The project is committed to addressing the root causes of poverty in low income rural communities by building organizational and community capacity; creating economic opportunities for individuals and families living in rural, isolated communities; helping to create infrastructure to support students and their families make a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education or a career; and supporting and increasing access to healthy foods. Over the past year, the Step By Step AmeriCorps VISTA members have recruited 2,510 community volunteers who served 24,157 hours; supported the development of community and school based gardening programs and food sharing programs in three counties impacting 457 families; developed the infrastructure for a drop-out prevention program and truancy intervention program impacting 302 youth; and leveraged cash resources in the amount of \$482,956 through grants from Grow Appalachia, Flex-E grants, and other community and foundation grants.

West Virginia's Promise –The Alliance for Youth is a statewide program that mobilizes partners to strengthen the capacity of local communities to develop and support young people. West Virginia's Promise AmeriCorps VISTA Project places 30 members throughout the state to strengthen the capacity of local communities so that every young person in West Virginia receives the Five Promises: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to help others. In 2014, the West Virginia's Promise VISTA members recruited 5,416 community volunteers who served 24,501 hours of service. VISTAs also enhanced the capacity of organizations to support healthy futures initiatives that impacted 1,224 low-income youth; organizations and school systems to provide education opportunities to 646 low income youth; and organizations that provide services to veterans and military families that impacted 210 individuals. The VISTAs leveraged nearly \$182,000 through community and foundation grants and secured in-kind resources valued at \$282,000.

AmeriCorps NCCC

In partnership with Step by Step, a Appalachian nonprofit which brings together diverse organizations to help better serve economically challenged communities in Southern West Virginia, an AmeriCorps NCCC team succeeded in bringing sustainable change the local community by improving the infrastructure of the Big Ugly Community Center (BUCC). The BUCC serves a community where over 50 percent of children under 18 years of age live below the poverty line and less than five percent of adults have any post-secondary education experience. The NCCC team worked to renew the BUCC facility, painting murals, renovating classrooms, two libraries, and a gym, and constructing 2 storage facilities. The team also completed an environmental and energy conservation project in which they established a recycling program and solicited help with renovations by organizing a community engagement day deemed "Keep Big Ugly Beautiful." The team worked with BUCC summer campers to receive and inventory food and clothing and to construct teepees for the kid's Native American History Unit. One community member summarized the work NCCC did best by saying, "Y'all brought magic into this place."

Two AmeriCorps NCCC teams, in partnership with River to Ridges Heritage Trail Inc., participated in projects that revitalized and restored multiple sites in the Scott Depot area. The mission of Rivers to Ridges is to facilitate the development and promotion of a 120-plus mile scenic byway in West Virginia. The efforts of the NCCC team helped in the preserving the historic sites in order to educate people about Appalachian culture and history and promote local tourism. The team completed work at five major sites: the Hoge House where they restored an historic building and the surrounding area, the Virgil Lewis House where they prepared the historic house for relocation to the Farm Museum, Hometown Park where the team helped restore park assets like picnic tables and playground equipment that were damaged due to a devastating derecho in 2012, the River Museum, which the NCCC team restored and revitalized, and the Esther and Norman Walter Nature Trail which the team worked to repair. The team's largest project was restoring the Buffalo Town Square playground in Buffalo, WV. They also worked to demolish the historic Shumaker-Lewis house in Mason, West Virginia, and convert the site into a park.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Foster Grandparents Program sponsored by the Region 8 Planning and Development Council has 89 volunteers serving 13 counties in West Virginia. On average, 58 percent of 4th graders living in the counties served are reading below grade level. The majority of schools in this program's catchment area are Title I schools and do not meet progress benchmarks. The Foster Grandparents work with children from low-income and disadvantaged homes, many of whom suffer severe delays in learning and who are falling behind and/or are not socially interactive. Over the last year, 89 Foster Grandparents provided 114,060 hours of service to at risk children in need of educational supports such as tutoring and mentoring. Ninety six percent of the children served in varied academic settings were able to complete assigned tasks and socialize in a healthy and appropriate manner. Seventy five percent of the children with language and motor skill delays receiving supports from Foster Grandparents through the Head Start program were able to enter Kindergarten on time.

Senior Corps RSVP

The RSVP program of the Council of the Southern Mountains has 530 RSVP volunteers serving in a four county area in rural southern coal fields of West Virginia. The communities served - once booming mining towns - are now cut off from lack of services and isolated by non-existent public transportation systems. A total of 160 RSVP volunteers make reassurance/check in calls and home visits to ensure clients' basic health and well-being. Ten volunteers visit veterans and deliver toiletries and other comfort items. These activities impact 564 individuals and 100 percent of those surveyed report feeling less isolated because of the visits from RSVP. Twenty-nine volunteers served more than 300 hours to distribute food, clothing, and furniture to ease the financial burden on families. Ninety-eight percent of the recipients report being able to meet their monthly financial obligations because of the assistance provided by RSVP. Another 368 RSVP volunteers have established 26 neighborhood watch programs impacting 9,000 individuals and families. Yearly surveys completed by the Sheriff's departments report an 86.9 percent reduction in crime as a result of RSVP efforts.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council sponsors a Senior Companion Program that serves 23 of the 55 counties in West Virginia. West Virginia has one of the highest rates of both seniors and people with disabilities living within its borders. With limited funding and very limited programming that provides companionship, respite and independent living services outside of the state waiver programs, the Senior Companion program fills a critical need in the counties and communities served. In fact, each of the current service sites has a waiting list for companions because of the tremendous need. Over the last year, 113 Senior Companions provided 116,608 hours of community service to individuals in need of independent living and companionship services. One hundred percent of the individuals who received services from Senior Companions reported that they feel an increased social support because of participation in the program. The Senior Companion volunteers were very active in their communities in other ways by collecting food for community food banks, reaching out to veterans and worked with other streams of national service on service projects.