

State Commission

This year, the Arizona Governor's Commission on Service and Volunteerism produced the 2015 Arizona Summit on Service and Civic Engagement, in collaboration with many community partners across the state. This two-day professional development conference for Arizona's volunteer sector attracted more than 550 participants representing 42 communities and 195 organizations. Highlights included a volunteer manager's track, veteran/military resource navigation training and other special tracks specific to community dialog facilitation, violence against women, substance abuse prevention, and service-learning. For Arizona, this initiative continues to gain momentum every year.

AmeriCorps State

Mesa United Way's AmeriCorps program, Operation Second Wind, places Arizona residents, most age 55 or over, as service delivery professionals at nonprofit agencies in the community. The objective of Operation Second Wind is to increase the quantity and quality of critical and emergency services available to individuals and families. Mesa United Way utilizes the service and expertise of 55 AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps member services include case management, program support, donation and volunteer coordination, unemployment support, federal and state tax preparation services, social services screening, and property and facility support. The multitude of partnerships and the varying roles allow AmeriCorps members to make strategic gains in the CNCS focus areas of economic opportunity, education, and healthy futures. In the 2014-2015 program year, AmeriCorps members leveraged more than 20,000 volunteer support hours, served more than 8,000 under-privileged children, mentored more than 1,000 individuals, provided independent living services to more than 2,400 people, and provided housing placement services to nearly 2,500 individuals.

Seniors Serving Seniors has 27 AmeriCorps members age 55 and over serving with Area Agency on Aging, Region One. They deliver services to Maricopa County citizens who are 60 years of age and older and people with disabilities. Since the program's inception, more than 1,200 people have received more than just a taxi ride. They had someone to talk to, who cared about the little extras. Case managers have reported that these clients no longer feel alone, unvalued, or forgotten. Over 90 percent of responses to surveys show this service increases or maintains their ability to retain their independence. To expand the reach in 2015, AmeriCorps members taught classes to elder refugees who do not qualify for ESL. They are tutored or taught basics to help them achieve the ability to learn in an ESL classroom, eventually being able to take a citizenship class and become a US citizen. Members also conducted afterschool workshops in a program that addresses misperceptions and attitudes towards older people and elder abuse. Members were assigned the Adult Protective Services to provide follow-up support for clients who were referred for physical or financial abuse, self-neglect, and exploitation.

AmeriCorps National

College Advising Corps has five AmeriCorps members serving full-time as college advisers at five high schools in Tucson. The members are placed in underserved high schools and work to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students who enter and complete higher education. The AmeriCorps members provide the counsel and encouragement that students need to navigate the college admissions process. They help students plan their college searches, complete admissions and financial aid applications, and enroll at schools that will serve them well. In 2015, these 5 members served 1,500 students. They held 1,511 one-to-one meetings with students and met with 1,392 students in group sessions or classroom presentations. They also organized college representative visits for 696 seniors and helped with the completion of 1,175 college applications.

American Conservation Experience in Flagstaff enrolled 187 AmeriCorps members to serve on environmental conservation projects in 2015. Project included trail maintenance and construction, removal of invasive species, fuels reduction, and environmental surveys. Over the course of the year, members completed 178 miles of trail maintenance and construction, built 7 miles of fencing, and treated or fully restored 1,657 acres of land.

FoodCorps has seven AmeriCorps members serving in Flagstaff, Fort Apache, Prescott, San Simon, Tucson, Tuba City, and Whiteriver. FoodCorps is a nationwide team of AmeriCorps leaders who work under the direction of local partner organizations to connect children to real food and help them grow up healthy. They teach children hands-on lessons about food and nutrition build and tend school gardens, teach cooking lessons, and help change what's on lunch trays so that children can eat healthy food from local farms. In the past year, the FoodCorps members in Arizona served 3,428 children, built or brought back into use 38 school and community gardens, harvested 1,400 pounds of produce, and recruited 263 community volunteers.

One Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Corps AmeriCorps member served this past year at Arizona Western Area Health Education Center at the Regional Center for Boarder Health in Somerton. YMHFA is a certification course that introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of adolescent mental health problems, focuses on the importance of early intervention, and teaches how to help adolescents who are in crisis or having a mental health or substance use challenge. The AmeriCorps member, who is a trained YMHFA instructor, certified 101 community members in the program. The AmeriCorps member served on the Coalition for Youth Risk and Protective Factors and is training probation officers. A three month follow-up survey revealed that YMHFA strategies helped 69 adolescents who struggle with a mental health challenge or illness.

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA Team Leader Molly Sheehy and AmeriCorps VISTA member Sara Fitzsimon, working with staff from Prescott College's national service project Arizona Serve and Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild, secured a grant of \$100,000 from the Marshall Foundation. This generous grant will match the Operation AmeriCorps grant supporting Mayor Rothschild's Community Schools Initiative. This initiative works to leverage national service members as coordinators and navigators scaling up eight low-income public schools into full-service resource hubs providing needed services to low-income students and their families, and ultimately ensuring that all graduating high school seniors from participating schools are connected to college, employment, military service, national service, or paid internships.

HandsOn AmeriCorps VISTA member Ashley Abbey, along with HandsOn VISTA Alumni Kira Anderson and Lani Horiuchi, were recently recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). Each year, NACo presents awards for innovative county programming across 21 categories. All three VISTA members served or are serving with Maricopa Integrated Health System and were specifically recognized for their work on the program "Health Literacy and Education Using Technology for People Living with HIV/AIDS." Abbey, Anderson, and Horiuchi were responsible for bringing this critical training to 357 participants over the course of 30 classes.

AmeriCorps NCCC

In service with the Crown King Fire District, two AmeriCorps NCCC Fire Management teams assisted in removing wild land fuels and constructing defensible spaces around homes in Crown King. NCCC members also completed 108 hours of training in wildland firefighting. They removed approximately 12,500 pounds of brush, burned 1.5 acres in prescribed burns, and removed 29 acres of brush in order to reduce fire danger to 15 homes. The team tended 50 trees and responded to 21 requests for Emergency Medical Services. The team created fire safe zones by clearing the area of brush and other fuel, and assisting with medical calls.

An AmeriCorps NCCC team partnered with the International Sonoran Desert Alliance to assist in ongoing community revitalization and cleanup efforts focused on the historic town center as well as the main corridor of Ajo. Ajo is a town struggling to emerge from a multi-generational recession. Community organizations have identified eco and cultural tourism as viable and sustainable economic development strategies. NCCC members focused on town revitalization and improvements to promote eco and cultural tourism. NCCC members helped remove 9,200 lbs. of brush, plant 3,300 native plants, install an irrigation system for 4,200 square feet of garden space, and renovate three buildings. In addition, the team built 1,150 feet of fencing, planted and tended four community gardens, and painted 2,500 square feet of renovated school hallways and two murals.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Since 1965, the Navajo Nation Foster Grandparent Program, has been engaging Elders to serve as Foster Grandparent volunteers, where they teach children living on the reservation Dine' culture, language, and traditions, and work to improve literacy and math performance. Last year, 121 Foster Grandparent volunteers provided tutoring and mentoring support to more than 498 disadvantaged youth. Of the children assisted by Foster Grandparent volunteers, 342 reported an improvement in academic performance and 100 children demonstrated gains in social and or emotional development. It was reported that 28 youth received mentoring in Dine' culture, language and traditions. More than 28 infants and young children were cared for by a Foster Grandparent volunteer. Last year, the Foster Grandparent volunteers served over 110,000 hours at 68 volunteer stations.

Senior Corps RSVP

The Experience Corps Phoenix program placed RSVP reading tutors in ten Phoenix Title 1 elementary schools in areas of high poverty and high levels of free and reduced lunch participation and a low number of students passing 3rd grade reading tests. In its inaugural year, 53 RSVP Senior Corps volunteers were placed in the schools. Experience Matters placed six AmeriCorps members as site coordinators with the program. Three hundred students were served in the first year and more than 98 percent of the students improved reading fluency. The program plans to build on this success by expanding services to five additional schools.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Our Family Services in Tucson engages Senior Companion Program (SCP) volunteers to assist seniors to live independently in Pima County. Last fiscal year, 45 SCP volunteers served 46,762 hours assisting 344 seniors and disabled adults and caregivers. Of the seniors assisted by Senior Companions, almost 95 percent reported increased social connection due to the support they received. Clients reported receiving assistance in at least two of eight activities of daily living including assistance with transportation, grooming, and meal preparation. One hundred percent of caregivers reported that they are better able to provide support to their family member, allowing the member to remain living in the home due to SCP services. According to the results of the most recent volunteer satisfaction survey, 94 percent of SCP volunteers reported that they have purpose in serving others, 100 percent stated that they are making a difference in the lives of others, 83 percent reported that their physical health has improved and 89 percent reported that their quality of life has improved due to serving others. And finally, 91 percent reported improved confidence and self-esteem due to volunteering.