

State Commission

Serve Colorado, the Governor's Commission on Community Service, builds a culture of civic engagement across the state in partnership with community-based organizations. The Commission guides the work of Serve Colorado's three distinct programs: AmeriCorps Colorado, managing the state's national service programs; Colorado Reads, the state's early literacy initiative; and leading Days of Service and Governor's Service Awards to promote volunteerism. Housed in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Serve Colorado programs closely align with statewide priorities such as increasing access to education and improving student outcomes. Serve Colorado administers 17 AmeriCorps State grants; with 14 programs engaging 1,100 AmeriCorps members to address community needs. Serve Colorado also manages three planning grants, helping organizations explore how national service can be further used across the state. Programs directly impact early literacy and education, job skill development, homelessness, substance abuse prevention and treatment, and environmental sustainability.

AmeriCorps State

Third grade literacy is proven to be one of the most important indicators of educational success, but sadly, 16,000 Colorado third graders aren't reading at grade level. Mile High United Way's Colorado Reading Corps' goal is to increase proficiency to 84 percent by 2020. AmeriCorps members in the Colorado Reading Corps offer one-on-one, daily tutoring for kindergartners through third graders in Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, and Jefferson Counties. The program is a proven cost-effective model that builds on twelve years of data and a close partnership with the Minnesota Reading Corps. In 2015, more than 50 AmeriCorps members served in the Colorado Reading Corps and improved the literacy and math skills of 1,200 students. By the end of the third year for this grant, it will have helped more than 5,000 students make significant progress in their reading proficiency and prepare them for further educational success.

La Puente Home, the Southwest Rural Education Collaborative, serves Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, Saguache, Montezuma, La Plata, and Chaffee counties. Its AmeriCorps program combats rural poverty in the San Luis Valley - the world's largest alpine valley - which is bigger than Connecticut and has a population of approximately 46,000. In the past year, more than 16,000 people - one in three residents of the valley - have used one of La Puente's services. AmeriCorps members provide service that empowers people to live independently and with dignity. In the last year, La Puente's 22 AmeriCorps members helped 3,632 individuals with housing placement, helped 1,301 people transition into housing, and recruited and managed 661 volunteers. Their service helped La Puente serve 12,000 people who used their food bank. The AmeriCorps members have truly become part of the community and embody La Puente's motto, "See the need, meet the need."

AmeriCorps National

City Year Denver AmeriCorps has 72 members who serve full-time at nine schools, helping more than 3,880 students at greatest risk of dropping out. City Year AmeriCorps members work alongside teachers, using research-based tools to improve students' attendance, behavior, and performance in math and English. The members also lead afterschool programs and school-wide initiatives to improve school culture. Thanks to the members' service, 67 percent of students in grades 6 through 9 who had previously earned a D or worse in English improved to a C or better and 86 percent of Denver teachers agree that City Year AmeriCorps members provide critical academic support that helps students stay on track.

AmeriCorps members with the Southwest Conservation Corps, which operates out of Durango and Salida, improved more than 875 miles of trails and 2,283 acres. Corps members included 29 military veterans who were able to continue their service to the nation through AmeriCorps. Corps members begin their service with a collaborative 8-week Crew Leader Training that builds a foundation for personal and land development. An alumnus wrote while in the program, "The Corps tests your ability, challenges and teaches you to help restore your community, helps you gain access to new and safe teachings. The Corps is a positive environment that focuses on teambuilding, communication, and safe ways to learn new abilities. The Corps helped me gain access to my abilities and motivation toward my personal goals." The Southwest Conservation Corps empowers people to have a positive impact on their lives, their communities, and the environment.

Two Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Corps AmeriCorps members served this past year at the Colorado Behavioral Health Council in Denver. 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 328 community members in the program. A three month follow-up survey revealed that YMHFA strategies helped 429 adolescents who struggle with a mental health challenge or illness.

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTAs serving with the United Way of Weld County Right to Read program are helping the organization reduce illiteracy and poverty. In 2015, AmeriCorps VISTA member Linda Warren secured a grant for \$80,000 for Right to Read to provide English as a Second Language classes to refugees. The grant, which is renewable for four years, enables Right to Read to continue providing its English as a Second Language program. VISTAs also successfully developed partnerships with the University of Northern Colorado to help increase their volunteer base.

AmeriCorps VISTAs with the Telluride Foundation were instrumental in securing \$1,550,000 in grant funding for the next three years from the Boettcher Foundation. The funds will be used to focus on continued technical assistance to the Patient Health Navigator program and to support the Community Health Worker program.

AmeriCorps NCCC

In partnership with the Pike San Isabel National Forest-Lake George and the U.S. Forest Service, an AmeriCorps NCCC team responded to wildland fires, both locally and nationwide, and worked on fuel reduction and other environmentally focused assignments when not fighting fires. NCCC members received certifications in wildland fire firefighting and chainsaw operation and worked to mitigate the risk of future wild fires. This was accomplished through controlled burns, preparation for three future burns, and elimination of available fuels. Members also constructed slash piles as habitat for forest wildlife. In Leadville, the team helped to improve forest health by cutting down trees infested with the mistletoe parasite. As a forest fire resource, the team also responded to a 60-acre fire in Teller County and assisted in both initial attack and clean up after the fire.

The Action Center in Lakewood requested an AmeriCorps NCCC team to provide immediate assistance to the Food Pantry, Clothing Bank, and Homeless Shelter, connecting donated resources directly to families facing crisis. The mission of the Action Center is to provide an immediate response to basic human needs and to promote pathways to self-sufficiency. NCCC members collected and distributed a total of 83,478 pounds of food, collected and distributed 7,800 pounds of clothing and sorted or distributed a total of 11,300 household goods and personal items. The team provided 10,090 people with food, water, clothing, personal items, and household goods. The team also assisted 2,635 homeless people and managed 297 volunteers. The Action Center staff was able to work more efficiently and focus on the clients, volunteers were motivated to work harder and achieve more, and the NCCC members' involvement with community special events inspired the people of Jefferson County to get more involved in their communities.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Pueblo Senior Resource Development Agency Foster Grandparent Program in Pueblo supported 59 Foster Grandparents to assist students in grades K-4 achieve reading proficiency that meets state academic achievement standards. Foster Grandparents tutor, mentor, and serve as role models. This year, the Foster Grandparents are serving more children as classroom sizes are expanding due to shrinking budgets. Foster Grandparents served 282 students and 89 percent of them demonstrated improved academic performance in literacy.

Senior Corps RSVP

Adams/East Arapahoe Schools Where All Thrive tutor-mentor program serves in 20 elementary schools. Trained RSVP volunteers work individually with struggling second and third grade students to improve their reading skills. Last year, the program served 375 students. Eight-five percent of the students gained at least a full year's skills growth, and fifty percent demonstrated two or more years of growth. RSVP volunteers also provided students with more than 2,000 free books.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

St. Mary's Senior Companion Program in Grand Junction supports Senior Companions to visit and assist elderly clients with shopping, medical appointments, and outings. While addressing their needs for transportation and community access, the Senior Companions provide valuable socialization and friendship. Senior Companions provide their clients with self-sufficiency and independence and allow them to remain independent in their homes for as long as possible. In 2015, 39 Senior Companions provided independent living services to 288 clients. Eight percent of these clients reported increased social support.

Social Innovation Fund

Social Innovation Fund programs are investing \$688,250 to expand the impact of 13 nonprofits in Colorado, focusing primarily on early childhood development and supportive housing. Kindergarteners, first graders, and third graders who participated in Summit 54's Summer Advantage program demonstrated statistically significant improved reading scores. Teachers reported increased preparedness of children re-entering school each fall, allowing them to gain more ground during the school year.