

State Commission

The New York State Commission on National and Community Service - New Yorkers Volunteer seeks to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering in New York State. It was established in 1994 by an Executive Order of the Governor, and administers programs funded by the National Community Service Trust Act of 1993, including AmeriCorps State and AmeriCorps Education Awards programs. The Commission seeks to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering in New York State. Commission members each have a strong background in community service and leadership and provide a tremendous resource to the state service and volunteer communities. The role of each Commission member includes: monitoring and approving the annual grants process and recommendations for funding of National Service programs. The Commission also promotes volunteering and community service as proven methods to solve local problems in our communities.

AmeriCorps State

AmeriCorps members serving in the Harlem Children's Zone's (HCZ) Peacemaker Program play a critical role in a pioneering comprehensive, community-building initiative called the HCZ Project. The Project is a neighborhood-based network of programs and services that create positive opportunities and outcomes for more than 25,000 children and adults who live in a 97-block area of Central Harlem. More than 125 AmeriCorps members support three key programs within the HCZ Project to improve the academic outcomes of Central Harlem children and youth. Members will support success in school, helping to improve literacy rates for 2,000 children in grades K – 5 at seven NYC public elementary schools in Harlem. Members support the school readiness of 237 three- and four-year-olds at the Harlem Gems pre-kindergarten programs, helping to ensure that they enter school kindergarten ready to learn. Members will support 200 Central Harlem high school youth, helping them graduate high school on time and gain acceptance into college.

New York State's Excelsior Conservation Corps is a new environmental education and stewardship AmeriCorps program for 18 to 25 year olds. AmeriCorps members perform meaningful environmental projects across New York State while gaining hands-on-experience and skills in conservation careers. Envisioned in Governor Cuomo's 2015 Opportunity Agenda, the Excelsior Conservation Corps will enroll 50 members, striving for diverse membership and veteran engagement. The 10-month service program is administered by the Student Conservation Association, a leading national organization in youth and young adult conservation service and environmental education programs. "The Excelsior Conservation Corps will offer young New Yorkers the opportunity to gain skills and training while addressing some of our state's most pressing environmental needs," Governor Cuomo said. "Continuing this state's rich tradition of environmental stewardship, this new initiative will help ensure New York becomes cleaner and greener than ever before."

AmeriCorps National

Citizen Schools is a nonprofit organization that partners with middle schools to expand the learning day for children in low-income communities. Its AmeriCorps members serve at public schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan, leading real-world learning projects, providing academic support, and helping all students discover and achieve their dreams. In their two years of service, AmeriCorps members serve as Teaching Fellows, giving students months of extra learning through academic mentoring and skill-building apprenticeships that translates into college readiness and career opportunities. Citizen Schools has been recognized as a leader in engaging volunteers, generating student impact, and balancing direct service with systemic change efforts. Students who are supported by Citizen Schools graduated from high school within four years at a rate of 71 percent, compared to 59 percent among matched peers, and 61 percent of Citizen Schools' alumni enroll in college.

City Year New York City AmeriCorps has 307 AmeriCorps members who serve full-time at 27 schools, helping more than 16,130 students at greatest risk of dropping out. AmeriCorps members serve 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. Half of the students who received attendance coaching from City Year New York AmeriCorps members improved their attendance by at least two percent average daily attendance, reclaiming at least 28 hours of time that would have been lost. In addition, eight out of ten students who are tutored in English Language Arts see progress on literacy assessments and three-fourths of students who receive tutoring improve on math assessments.

Relay Graduate School has 116 full-time AmeriCorps Professional Corps members serving across New York City as part of the Relay New York Teaching Residency. The Residency addresses the need for better and more diverse teachers in low-income communities across New York City by recruiting college graduates from the local community and training them over two years to serve as full-time teachers through a comprehensive residency program. In their first year, AmeriCorps members serve as teachers-in-training in one of Relay's high-needs partner public schools. Each member is paired with a Resident Advisor and spends five days a week in the Advisor's classroom, learning to use high-impact teaching strategies. At the end of their first year, the AmeriCorps members are prepared and certified to serve as full-time teachers of record, poised for a career improving educational and life outcomes for students in low-income communities. Relay's members have reached 1,257 students, and 886 of these students (70 percent) saw gains in either math or English knowledge.

Two Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Corps AmeriCorps members served this past year at Westchester Jewish Community Services in White Plains and Compeer West in Buffalo. 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 members, who are trained YMHFA instructors, certified 317 community members in the program. A three month follow-up survey revealed that YMHFA strategies helped 122 adolescents who struggle with a mental health challenge or illness. Jewish Community Services certified school security staff as part of their Project AWARE program. Compeer West certified Cheektowaga school district staff as part of their Project AWARE program.

Youth Volunteer Corps has two AmeriCorps members who serve Manhattan. This year, the Youth Volunteer Corps AmeriCorps members have engaged 27 young people, including 11 disadvantaged youth. These youth volunteers gave 442 hours of service. They served on 36 projects for local agencies, including Via Christi Village, Meadowlark Hills, and Purple Power Animal Welfare Society.

AmeriCorps VISTA

AmeriCorps VISTA member Laurie Dutton serves through the New York Campus Compact AmeriCorps VISTA program at SUNY Fredonia. She created a successful Fredonia Elementary School Food Day, recruiting 72 pre-service teachers to volunteer. Students rotated through ten stations about making healthy choices, photosynthesis, and other topics. NY Campus Compact AmeriCorps VISTA members at SUNY Stony Brook in Long Island created a "Brain Day" field trip in collaboration with the neurosciences department at Stony Brook. This trip was specifically designed for the high needs students of Central Islip Middle School. Ten graduate student volunteers led 30 middle school students through brain-related activities such as dissecting sheep brains, touring neuroscience labs, and viewing brain slices under microscopes. The event was to get the students excited about science and hopefully encourage them to continue choosing science electives through high school.

The New York Immigration Coalition began in 1987 to provide a unified voice and a vehicle for collective action for New York State's diverse immigrant communities and for native-born people alike. Today it is a statewide program with more than 200 member organizations. Some of these member organizations serve as sites for an AmeriCorps VISTA project. Members are helping to build capacity at nonprofits that serve mainly low-income immigrant communities that are welcoming new Americans. Much of the capacity building involves outreach through the technology such as blogs, websites, videos, and portals like Facebook and Instagram. Members are also involved in grant writing and fundraising. The member's efforts in volunteer generation and training has resulted in the recruitment of some 300 volunteers and enabled more than 600 service recipients to attend citizenship workshops, learn financial literacy, learn about occupational health and safety, become informed about disaster preparedness in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, and apply for citizenship.

AmeriCorps NCCC

Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary is driven by the simple philosophy that kindness and respect to animals is our duty and that all the creatures that share this earth are here with us and not for us. During the summer of 2015, an AmeriCorps NCCC team helped prepare a new location for Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary. More than 300 animals required indoor or outdoor space, as well as fencing for each species, and there was a two-mile stretch of hiking trail that needed renovation. The team was tasked with a variety of projects, ranging from constructing and restoring a hiking trail (including moving 5,000 pounds of rocks), clearing pastures full of old debris, clearing acres of woods for the pigs and cows, cleaning and managing the chicken coops, clearing areas for the chickens, shrub, and garden maintenance, raking 200 pounds of leaves and vegetation, painting the inside and outside of the medical barn, the main office, and the visitor center, clearing campsites, and helping 40 guinea fowl relocate to the farm.

In the spring of 2015, a FEMA Corps team assisted Public Assistance program staff at the Joint Field Office in Forest Hills. AmeriCorps NCCC members completed, submitted, and reviewed grant applications, called Project Worksheets, on behalf of NY state agencies needing federal funding for repairs to be made as a result of damage done from Hurricane Sandy. FEMA Corps members tracked external requests and progress within the Public Assistance branch, organized data, and verified dollar amounts. Through cost verifications, AmeriCorps members ensured that the numbers on worksheets were correct and supported by the proper records invoices. Through these and other tasks, members helped bring Public Assistance operations closer to an end. Members assisted in writing 9 Project Worksheets totaling \$15,668,661 in requested grant funds. The applicants for these grants included the NY Police Department, Governor's Island, and local governments.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Foster Grandparent Program in New York's Capital Region is making a difference in Head Start classrooms. Forty-five Foster Grandparent volunteers serve one on one with 90 children, helping to prepare them for entering kindergarten. Ninety percent of the children served live in poverty and all have an identified special or exceptional need. Foster Grandparents typically work with two children each, engaging in age appropriate activities to help the children develop cognitive, behavioral, and emotional skills. Foster Grandparents assist children with number and letter recognition activities, literacy activities, colors, object identification, social skills, and other appropriate activities. Ninety percent of the children served demonstrated gains in literacy skills. Beyond that, the bonds created between the senior volunteers and children provide both parties with warm relationships, build intergenerational understanding and communication, and contribute to increased self-esteem.

Senior Corps RSVP

Broome County RSVP, in Binghamton, NY has 386 volunteers who support programs such as Meals on Wheels. Research showed that the prevalence of falls in Broome County was the highest in New York State, and because falls result in significant medical costs for older adults, RSVP has trained volunteers to lead Tai Chi exercises. RSVP collaborates with the Broome County Health Department and the New York State Health Department on the Better Balance Broome Project and the Broome County Community Health Improvement Plan to offer the Tai Chi for Arthritis exercise program. Designed by Dr. Paul Lam, this is a program recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Administration on Aging as an evidence-based fall prevention program. This 12-form Sun Style set of movements focuses on improved relaxation, balance, posture, and joint pain management. Classes meet for an hour twice a week for eight weeks. The RSVP Director is a certified instructor and has trained nine RSVP volunteers as exercise leaders; and more than 100 seniors have participated as students, many of them attending multiple sessions of the classes.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

Health Association of Niagara County, Inc. (HANCI) manages a Senior Companion Program in Niagara County, along with an RSVP and Foster Grandparent Program. Over the last several years, Niagara County has suffered from economic depression due to the exodus of several large manufacturing companies. Seventeen percent of this county's population is 65+ years old, and 9.2 percent of the county's population is age 65+ and living in poverty. In 2015, 83 volunteers from the Senior Companion Program committed over 80,000 hours to serve 219 Niagara county residents who are age 65 or older with the goal of keeping residents living independently in their own homes. Senior Companion volunteers provide home visitation, transportation to medical appointments, and accompaniment for grocery shopping and other essential shopping trips. Volunteers also frequently inform clients of appropriate community services and benefits. While meeting the practical needs of seniors, volunteers also provide friendship and socialization for clients. A reported outcome of this Senior Companion Program shows that 70 percent of served clients are able to remain in their own homes and continue living independently.

Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF) transforms lives by using evidence to find what works and make it work for more people. The SIF Classic and SIF Pay for Success programs harness the expertise of grant-making intermediaries to identify, evaluate and expand effective nonprofits serving low-income communities across America. The SIF programs throughout the state are using innovative approaches to overcome challenges in the areas of healthy futures, economic opportunities and youth development. In the past year, the CAS Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program provided services to a total of 3,744 youth. The Food Bank of NYC's SaveUSA program enrolled 1,340, the most participants ever, who deposited nearly \$1 million in savings accounts. The Children's Aid Society-New York, through its Family Rewards program, helped families earn more than \$4 million in rewards, an average of more than \$6,700 per family in New York City. St. Nicks Alliance WorkAdvance program had an average placement wage of over \$15 per hour. The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$1,568,799 in expanding the impact of 24 nonprofits in New York.

Volunteer Generation Fund

The New York State Commission on National and Community Service is working with five nonprofit organizations located throughout New York State that will involve volunteers in efforts to alleviate poverty and increase opportunity for New Yorkers. The Commission's subgrantees, acting as connector organizations, are committed to recruiting, training, placing and managing volunteers within their organizations and within partner nonprofit organizations in their communities. Subgrantee organizations identified an issue area of focus, under the overall goal of alleviating poverty, and have articulated how the volunteers they recruit, train and manage will make a demonstrable impact in their communities.