

National Service Impact in South Carolina

State Commission

The South Carolina Commission on National and Community Service manages a portfolio of 12 AmeriCorps programs with 504 AmeriCorps members serving in 17 counties addressing critical needs in the areas of education, economic opportunity, and veterans and military families. In the 2014-2015 program year, 17,241 students were engaged in educational services, 7,582 individuals received financial literacy assistance, and 1,473 volunteers were recruited. In addition to their regular service, 99 AmeriCorps members provided more than 1,000 hours of disaster relief services following the historic flooding in October. Last year, the Commission funded three planning grants to organizations looking to develop AmeriCorps programs to meet pressing needs in other parts of the state.

AmeriCorps State

Although it seems hard to imagine that college and middle school students would willingly forfeit every Saturday of the academic year to go an extra day of school, it's happening in rural South Carolina because of two AmeriCorps programs; Claflin University Saturday Academy and University of South Carolina Aiken Saturday Academy. Students and AmeriCorps members spend the majority of the day engaged in one-on-one interactive tutoring sessions. Middle-school students learn to feel at home on a college campus and discover what it takes to succeed from their AmeriCorps mentors. The majority of the members are students in the College of Education who use the opportunity to engage with students and sharpen their skills before graduation. The programs achieve several impressive results. In the last year, the programs helped 70 students increase their academic performance. Ninety-eight AmeriCorps members increased their tutoring skills and 20 parents learned a new reading methodology. The program is helping students and their AmeriCorps mentors in Orangeburg, Calhoun, Barnwell, and Aiken counties achieve their goals and get on track for success in their careers.

Trident United Way and United Way of Greenville County both host AmeriCorps programs focused on creating financial stability in their communities. Through these programs, AmeriCorps members served nine counties and provided more than 3,000 individuals with financial stability services in the last year. Both models implement a tiered approach; first focusing on addressing basic needs and teaching financial literacy. Individuals are then coached to develop their job skills, increasing income and gaining assets. Through these programs, individuals begin the path to financial stability and continue to move at a pace that suits their circumstances until they reach financial independence. In addition to the service of AmeriCorps members, more than 1,000 community volunteers serve in the support of the program's goals. The AmeriCorps members learn valuable skills during their year of service and are frequently hired by local nonprofits following their service year due to their transferrable skillset.

AmeriCorps National

City Year Columbia AmeriCorps has 24 members who serve full-time at three schools, serving more than 1,400 students at greatest risk of dropping out. 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, 81 percent of students in grades 6 through 9 who had a grade of D or worse improved to a C or better, and 93 percent of teachers agree that City Year AmeriCorps members improve students' respectfulness toward one another.

AmeriCorps VISTA

South Carolina Campus Compact, hosted at Winthrop University, is a membership organization of 17 university and college presidents and chancellors who are dedicated to enhancing the civic purposes of higher education. This goal is accomplished by partnering with communities to engage students, faculty, and staff to impact community needs. The SCCC AmeriCorps VISTA Campus Partner Project focuses its efforts in the areas of education, economic opportunity, healthy futures, and veterans and military families. AmeriCorps VISTA members are stationed at institutions of higher education across the state to assess community needs, build relationships with community partners, develop and facilitate programming to meet those needs, and recruit and manage volunteers to build program capacity and sustainability. During the 2014-2015 school year, members recruited 8,023 volunteers who served 51,619 hours and leveraged \$33,055 in cash and \$72,336 in-kind resources. Through this project, more than 405 reciprocal community partnerships were made at both the sponsor and sub-site levels.

AmeriCorps VISTA members serving with United Way of Greenville County have built significant capacity at local nonprofit organizations in the areas of education and economic opportunity. Over the past year, VISTAs submitted 17 grant proposals on behalf of local nonprofit organizations, resulting in more than \$78,000 of additional funding to support local programs. VISTA members have also improved volunteer recruitment and management at their sites, recruiting more than 600 new volunteers and implementing strategies that have increased volunteer engagement by more than 40 percent within partner sites. The community-level impact of this support is seen in numerous Greenville-area programs addressing the needs of at-risk students and low-income community members. VISTA activities over the past year have benefited more than 400 at-risk students in Greenville and 250 low-income community members.

AmeriCorps NCCC

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations. An AmeriCorps NCCC team was called to support these ongoing efforts at Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge through treatment of invasive species, such as Chinese tallow tree and thorny olive. The team treated Chinese Tallow in the five treatment priority areas mapped out by US Fish and Wildlife Service biologists. Treating tallow consisted of mixing herbicide with a marker dye to aid in identifying trees that had already been treated. One team member would use the hatchet to score tree trunks, and the other member would apply herbicide to the incision. This work was done in dense brush in high heat and humidity, and without pre-marked trees. This work helped lead to the restoration of native habitats within the refuge, which supports a diverse range of bird and plant life.

The mission of Palmetto Conservation Foundation (PCF) is to conserve South Carolina's natural and cultural resources, preserve historic landmarks, and promote outdoor recreation through trails and greenways. An AmeriCorps NCCC team assisted in the completion of an elevated walkway that will span the three-quarters of a mile floodplain to connect the Palmetto Trail to the Wateree River. The team's work primarily consisted of the cutting of decking for the walkway and the preassembly of supports. Utilizing these historic structures, and under the advisement of qualified staff, the team will add decking and rails to create a pathway that will take hikers and cyclists over a floodplain section of the trail which is impassable much of the year. In addition to the work on the walkway, members completed extensive repairs to weatherworn decking on two of the existing railroad trusses. The elevated walkway, when completed, will make this section of the Palmetto Trail open year round for trail users. The trail work Delta Two completed also optimized the trail for bikers, and fixed damage from a major ice storm that impacted 160 miles of trail throughout the region.

Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

The Aiken/Barnwell Counties Community Action Agency, Inc. is a people-oriented, nonprofit organization that has served the community since 1966. Last year, their Foster Grandparent Program had 107 senior volunteers who contributed 112,324 hours of service at 43 volunteer stations, including schools, Head Start centers, after-school programs, summer enrichment programs, and nonprofit day cares. They assisted approximately 898 children who were at-risk or needed one-on-one attention. Annual student assessment forms have shown that the children served have improved in academics, behaviors, and self-esteem due to the interaction with the Foster Grandparents. The volunteers help the community in other ways by participating in special projects such as MLK Day of Service, collecting canned goods for local food banks, and providing meals to fire and public safety departments.

Senior Corps RSVP

Senior Action RSVP of Greenville County provides a wealth of volunteer opportunities for seniors to stay engaged in the community. Not only are senior volunteer lives improved, but the community has benefitted from the impact of more than 400 volunteers. The program partners with AARP and the IRS to provide tax assistance to more than 1,600 people annually. RSVP volunteers served more than 4,400 through financial stability programs in 2014. Through this work, the need for additional financial counseling was identified and the program is now expanding their financial education focus. One of the fastest growing needs among seniors is transportation to medical appointments and other essential errands. In 2014, RSVP volunteers drove beneficiaries more than 500 miles to medical appointments and errands. Volunteers serve in a variety of roles offering programming at the eleven locations that Senior Action operates. At these locations, close to 5,000 seniors attend classes that help them stay active and reduce isolation. RSVP volunteers lead classes in arthritis management, Tai Chi, Yoga, line dancing, computer classes, financial planning, visual and performing art programs, and more.

Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Senior Companion Program of Chester County serves the frail, disabled, and terminally ill in this rural county. In 2015, approximately 34 Senior Companions provide critical support to 81 clients. Volunteers help clients with grocery shopping, take them to medical appointments, and provide companionship, allowing them to live independently with dignity in their homes. They also provide respite for caregivers, share information when clients need food assistance, and volunteer on National Days of Service, including Make a Difference Day, when each Senior Companion brings items to help fill food bags for more than 400 elderly and poor in Chester County. Feedback and survey data show Senior Companion volunteers are making an impact by keeping elderly in their homes for longer, providing much needed services to help elderly live independently and maintain good health. Our companions even remember their clients' birthdays and bring cards and small gifts. These small acts of compassion and kindness are what this program is all about. People helping and caring deeply for each other. We are a small but "mighty" group.

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. In 2015, the SIF invested in five new nonprofits in South Carolina. The SIF programs throughout the state are focused on addressing issues such as early childhood education, workforce development, and healthcare accessibility. The Greenville Region Workforce Collaborative has worked with a manufacturing employer to train unskilled workers who are now earning \$19-22/hour plus benefits. In the past year, WINGS for Kids successfully opened four new sites, serving more than 400 additional youth. The Teen Leadership program at Greenville County Schools served 231 students in grades six through eight. The Social Innovation Fund is investing \$1,367,235 in expanding the impact of seven nonprofits in South Carolina.