



Summer 2011

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Michigan's 2011 AmeriCorps Week

What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is commonly described as the domestic Peace Corps. Individuals, called members, commit to a specific term of service (usually one year) and are housed in nonprofit organizations, schools, or other agencies. Members range in age from 17 to 70+ years and represent a wide spectrum of other demographics. Upon successful completion of their service, members earn an

education award to pay for college, graduate school, or to pay back qualified student loans. During their service, members may also be eligible to receive a modest living allowance, health insurance, childcare, and student loan deferment. More than 620,000 AmeriCorps members have helped recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers, tutor and mentor youth, build

affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, respond to disasters, and build the capacity of faith-based and community organizations since 1994. Together with the federal initiatives Senior Corps and Learn and Serve-America, AmeriCorps is meeting critical needs in communities and promoting civic participation.

What is AmeriCorps Week?

AmeriCorps Week is an opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners, and friends to demonstrate AmeriCorps' impact on critical issues, bring more Americans into service, and thank the community partners

who make AmeriCorps possible. AmeriCorps Week shines a spotlight on AmeriCorps' impact in communities across the country in order to motivate more Americans to join AmeriCorps or volunteer in their communities. The 2011

AmeriCorps week, Saturday, May 14-21, was a tremendous success with thousands of individuals participating in hundreds of events throughout the country. Multiple Governors and state legislatures officially declared AmeriCorps Week across the U.S. and AmeriCorps members were featured in news articles and other media coverage.



2011 Russ Mawby Signature Service Project Grand Rapids, MI

On Friday, May 20 and Saturday, May 21 more than 350 Michigan's AmeriCorps members from across the state gathered together in Grand Rapids for the annual Russ Mawby Signature Service Project. AmeriCorps members assisted with various community projects and served with several organizations to make a significant impact on the Grand Rapids community.

Each year, the Russ Mawby Signature Service Project brings hundreds of AmeriCorps members to one Michigan community for two days of training, teambuilding, and service. By the end of the second day, several projects are completed, visibly demonstrating the power of Michigan's AmeriCorps members in action. The 2011 project was a partnership with the Michigan Community Service Commission,

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Habitat for Humanity of Kent County, American Red Cross of Greater Grand Rapids, and Elemental Media. A special guest of the project included Grand Rapids Mayor George Heartwell who visited to thank members for their efforts.

For more information on the 2011 Signature Service Project visit www.mi-ssp.com.



Together We Can Change the World! Springfield Plains Elementary Festival Day

By: Kathleen Egan

On May 17, Ellen King (Learn and Serve – Michigan AmeriCorps*VISTA), Rachel Yerkey (Michigan's AmeriCorps Partnership member), and Kathleen Egan (Cross-Stream/Inclusion AmeriCorps*VISTA), traveled to Clarkston to participate in Springfield

spoke to the students, including the local Police, Fire, and EMS, as well as the Humane Society and local businesses.

Kathleen, Ellen, and Rachel led more than 100 students in a workshop focused on the importance of service and giving back to your community.

Students learned about AmeriCorps, Random Acts of Kindness, and ways they can incorporate service into their everyday lives. To put what they had learned into practice, students participated in a service project decorating lunch bags for Kids' Food Basket, a Grand Rapids nonprofit that provides take-home meals for kids who need them. Students

acts of kindness that day.

"Talking to the kids about the benefits of being an AmeriCorps member was a great way to celebrate AmeriCorps Week," Kathleen stated. "Showing them that even the little things you do every day can make your neighborhood and community a better



Plains Elementary School's annual Festival Day. The day's theme was 'Together We Can Change the World!' and a variety of community partners

were then sworn in as AmeriCorps mini-members, reciting a modified version of the AmeriCorps pledge and promising to perform three random



place was a wonderful reminder of one of the best parts of being an AmeriCorps member – making an impact and inspiring change!"

A Superior Clean Up! Superior AmeriCorps

By: Melinda Seppanen

During AmeriCorps Week 2011, Superior AmeriCorps members planned and participated in community clean-up service projects. Being from the Upper Peninsula, the program is fortunate to be surrounded by beautiful Lake Superior. The community takes pride in their parks and beaches, which both residents and tourists spend time enjoying. In recognition of AmeriCorps Week, SAC wanted to do something beyond their typical scope (education) to help out the community. Members contacted township supervisors from Dollar Bay, Chassell, and Oskar to plan

service projects to meet a need in the area.

Prior to the projects taking place, an AmeriCorps member spoke live on a local radio station to increase awareness



about AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Week and promote volunteering at the local clean-ups. At each project site, a SAC member led volunteers and fellow AC members to “Get Things Done.” The project sites included Sandy Bottom Beach of Dollar Bay, North Canal Park of Oskar, and the main street of Chassell.

Members and volunteers spent a few hours at each site raking, collecting garbage, and ensuring general cleanliness and aesthetic beauty. Township supervisors were very appreciative of the hard work and accomplishments. The maintenance supervisor of Dollar Bay, in regards to Sandy Bottom Beach, stated “This is the cleanest it’s been in years!”



Getting Things Done! Schools of Hope

By: Mary Shannon

AmeriCorps members in Grand Rapids’ Schools of Hope program had a busy spring! They eagerly participated in several projects that

got them involved in the community and also promoted literacy throughout the area.

The premier project was the “Read ‘N Give” Book Drive, which ultimately brought more than 11,000 new and gently used children’s books. This venture was a joint effort between Schools of Hope, Crowe Horwath LLP, and the LEAGUE Michigan. Schools of Hope AmeriCorps members were responsible for promoting the drive in local schools, collecting the books, and finally spending several days sorting the books and making “Summer Reading” packages. Those bags were distributed to hundreds of students throughout the area at the end of the school year to promote continued literacy development all summer long. Other beneficiaries included local nonprofits and charities which were able to stock up on books for the children they support. Lastly, hundreds of bilingual books and

learning materials were collected for the Schools of Hope Family Literacy programs!

Members also spent a day at the Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank. Some members sorted potatoes (more potatoes than you can imagine!) – while others put together boxes of folders to promote the food bank in the community. It was a great day teaming up and showing West Michigan what AmeriCorps Members are made of!



A Brighter Brightmore Metro-Detroit AmeriCorps Programs

By: Gabe Thurin

On May 21, several of the Metro-Detroit AmeriCorps programs got together for the Metro Detroit AmeriCorps Week Annual Service event. This year's event was held in Brightmore, which is a neighborhood in Detroit. AmeriCorps programs served in conjunction with the Motor City Blightbusters organization in order to clean up two

parks. The activities included tearing down an old fence, rehabbing old playground equipment, setting up new basketball back boards, cleaning up a baseball field, and general lawn and area maintenance.

There were nearly 200 AmeriCorps members and volunteers serving the event. They were also graced with the presence of the Mayor of Detroit,

Dave Bing, who gave the opening speech to kick off the event.

A special thanks to Lear for the generous donations of supplies in order to make this happen, and the Brightmore Alliance and community for being so supportive and allowing members to come into their community and serve with them.



Making a Difference with the Region 1 Transition Services Camp Fire USA

By: Megan Hunter

The word "service" took on a whole new meaning on May 18 for the AmeriCorps members of Camp Fire USA. Twenty AmeriCorps members collaborated with Region 1 Transition Services (R1TS) in Cedar Springs Michigan and their 44 students. The R1TS service project was part

of the AmeriCorps Week to promote and demonstrate the importance of community service and to continue the push towards the inclusion of many diverse populations within our communities.

As the R1TS students and AmeriCorps members began arriving around 8:30am on May 18th the atmosphere began to fill with excitement and curiosity as to what the day's events would bring. Cedar Springs Mayor Charlie Watson kicked off the activities with his speech about the importance of being involved in your community, volunteerism, and what can be accomplished when people work together towards a common goal. After completing the first dig of the day, groups broke off to begin their assigned activity. The service project provided a variety of different tasks, at different difficulty and skill



levels, ensuring there was something everyone could accomplish. One of the projects for the day included; building bookshelves for the R1TS Resale Store, a resale store which is open to the public, and run by students from R1TS program. Landscaping took place around the outside of the resale store, which included digging up the sod, planting bushes and flowers around the store, and putting stones

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along the side walk. New resale store donations were sorted and placed on the shelves; saw horses were sanded down and repainted; the bricks on the outside of the resale store were chipped away from old paint; mortar was placed to fill the spaces between the bricks; and finally, the bricks were repainted. Curbs around the campus, administration buildings, and resale store were repainted as well as the hand rails. Buses were washed and the R1TS storage building was

cleaned out and sorted. Students completed most of the tasks that had been set forth that day to be completed were, and walking away that day and the excitement, work ethic, and positive attitudes the R1TS students brought to the project, and the excitement that was felt at 8:30am was still felt at 2:00pm when the project was completed.

This project made a difference within the Cedar Springs Community

because the R1TS students felt invested in the work. Not only did the teams "Get Things Done," but this service boosted self-esteem, and gave students a sense of worth they may never have felt. The students of R1TS were grateful and appreciative of Camp Fire USA for wanting to take part in their program. Feeling appreciated and knowing the service they accomplished touched the lives of 44 students was especially meaningful!



2010-2011 LeaderCorps Members

Kristin Bates
Char-Em ISD AmeriCorps

Scott Baumgartner
Faith in Youth Partnership

John Bolan
Power of We Consortium A/C

Rhonda Catt
Michigan LISC

Sierra Dunlap
Cherry Street HealthCorps

Kathleen Egan
MCSC

Shiloh Fitzgibbon
MARESA – Michigan's AmeriCorps

Jason Gapa
MI Habitat's AmeriCorps

William Gast
Inner City A/C Neighborhood

Angela Greer
MPCA Community HealthCorps

Megan Hunter
Camp Fire USA AmeriCorps

Amanda Johnson
MI Campaign to End Homelessness

Rachel Koleda
Huron Pines AmeriCorps

David Mangum
the readetroit corps

Anita Patel
Detroit Youth Energy Squad

Carly Schneider
City Year Detroit

Melinda Seppanen
Superior AmeriCorps

Mary Irene Shannon
Schools of Hope

Nicole Staggs
AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program

Darren Taylor
Next Steps Community Reintegration A/C

Gabriel-Martin Thurin
Downriver CARES AmeriCorps

Ashlie Tillman
Saginaw Substance Abuse Prevention

Andrea Villaneuva
Mentor MI College Coaching Corps

Rachel Yerkey
Michigan AmeriCorps Partnership

Misty Youngson
Together We Prepare AmeriCorps

Program List and Contact Information

Camp Fire USA

Pam Bland, Program Director
Camp Fire USA, West Michigan Council
1257 E. Beltline NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
Phone: (616) 949-2500 x30
pam.bland@campfireusawmc.org

Char-Em ISD

Dennis Halverson, Program Director
Charlevoix-Emmet County ISD
08568 Mercer Blvd.
Charlevoix, MI 49720
Phone: (231) 547-9947
halversond@charemisd.org

Cherry Street Health Services

Kayla Morris-Doyle, Program Director
669 Stocking NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: (616) 776-2270
kaylam@cherryhealth.com

City Year Detroit

Nicole Byrd, Program Director
1 Ford Place
Detroit, MI 48202
Phone: (313) 874-6825
nbyrd@cityyear.org

Detroit Youth Energy Squad

Justin Schott, Program Director
WARM Training Center
4835 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, MI 48210
Phone: (313) 894-1030
Fax: (313) 894-1063
justin@youthenergysquad.org

Downriver CARES

Joe Spain, Program Director
The Guidance Center
15601 Northline Rd.
Southgate, MI 48195
Phone: (734) 785-7705 x7209
jspain@iamtgc.net

Faith in Youth Partnership

Robyn Afrik, Program Director
Good Samaritan Ministries
513 E. 8th St. Suite 25
Holland, MI 49423
Phone: (616) 392-7159
rafrik@goodsamministries.com

Goodwill

Jenna Gray-Shomler, Program Director
Goodwill of Greater Grand Rapids
3035 Prairie Street SW
Grandville, Michigan 49418
jgray-shomler@goodwillgr.org

Huron Pines AmeriCorps

Casey Ressler, Program Director
501 Norway St.
Grayling, MI 49738
Phone: (989) 344-0753 x30
casey@huronpines.org

Inner City Neighborhood Project

1286 Pipestone Rd, Benton Harbor, MI 49085
Phone: 269-926-2430
Fax: 269-926-2431
Latoya McBean, Manager
lmcbean@micccd.org

LISC

Sonja A. Dean
LISC - Michigan Statewide
119 North Church Street, Suite 201
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
Phone: (269) 343-5472 x7
Email: sdean@lisc.org

MARESA

Charles Yeager, Program Director
321 West Ohio St.
Marquette, MI 49855
Phone: (906) 226-5132
jzahn@maresa.org

MCSC – Service to All AmeriCorps

1048 Pierpont, Suite 4
Lansing, MI 48913
Phone: (517) 335-4295
Fax: (517) 373-4977
Megan Sargent, Program Director
sargent1@michigan.gov

Michigan AmeriCorps Partnership

Kim Hunter, Program Director
University of Michigan
Detroit Center at Orchestra Place
3663 Woodward Ave., Suite 150
Detroit, MI 48201
Phone: (313) 593-0937
kdhunter@umich.edu

MI Campaign to End Homelessness

Melissa Grant, Program Director
735 E. Michigan Ave.
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: (517) 335-3213
grantm2@michigan.gov

Michigan Foreclosure Prevention

15851 S. Old US 27, Bldg. 30, Ste. 315
Lansing, MI 48906
Phone: (313) 903-8113

Michigan Habitat's AmeriCorps

Jane Ray, Program Director
Habitat for Humanity
618 Creyts Rd. Suite 6
Lansing, MI 48917
Phone: (517) 485-1006 x13
jray@habitatmichigan.org

Midtown Urban Safety Project

Ramona Rodriguez-Washington, Program Director
Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies
5700 Cass Avenue, 2207 A/AB
Detroit, MI 48202
Phone: (313) 577-0979
r.r.washington@wayne.edu

MPCA Community Health Corps

John Taylor, Program Director
Kevin McGhee, Program Coordinator
7215 Westshire Dr.
Lansing, MI 48917
Phone: (517) 381-8800 x229
jtaylor@mpca.net

Power of We Consortium A/C Project

Katie Ellero, Program Director
5303 S. Cedar St.
P.O. Box 30161
Lansing, MI 48909-7661
Phone: (517) 887-4546
kellero@ingham.org

the readetroit corps

Angela Wilson, Program Director
Communities In Schools Detroit
5830 Field
Detroit, MI 48213
Phone: (313) 571-3400
angelawilson@cisdetroit.org

Saginaw Substance Abuse Prevention

Kristy Bitterman, Program Director
100 S. Jefferson Ave. 3rd Floor
Saginaw, MI 48607
Phone: (989) 755-0505 x 225
kbitterman@unitedwaysaginaw.org

Schools of Hope

Amy Kerns, AmeriCorps Coordinator
Schools of Hope
Heart of West Michigan United Way
118 Commerce SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Phone: (616) 742-2387
Fax: (616) 459-8460
akerns@hwmuw.org

Superior AmeriCorps

Stacy Crouch, Program Director
BHK Child Development
700 Park Ave.
Houghton, MI 49931
Phone: (906) 482-3663
slcrouch@bhkfirst.org

Together We Prepare AmeriCorps

Jordan O'Neil, Program Director
Red Cross of Greater Grand Rapids
1050 Fuller Ave. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503-1304
Phone: (616) 456-8661 x3503
joneil@ggr.redcrss.org

Vanguard; Next Steps Community Reintegration AmeriCorps

David Humphrey, Program Director
DHumphrey@vanguardcdc.org