



10 Ideas to Generate Coverage for AmeriCorps Week

1. **Show How AmeriCorps is Meeting a Local Need:** Every day AmeriCorps members are tackling tough problems that people in your area care deeply about – poverty, illiteracy, hunger, health, and crime. Pitch your local media with real-life examples of how AmeriCorps is having an impact on those issues. Show how service isn't just nice, it's necessary – and is making a difference in your hometown. Find out who covers your issue beat and prepare a member and someone they helped to be ready to tell their story.
2. **Focus on the Economic Recovery:** In today's economic climate, more people than ever are in need of the services that AmeriCorps members provide. How are the AmeriCorps members in your program helping your community respond to those needs? Whether through preventing foreclosures, running food drives, or helping people without jobs sharpen their employment skills, AmeriCorps members provide vital services to those in need. Develop story ideas around these areas, showing specific accomplishments of your AmeriCorps members.
3. **Invite a Local VIP:** To add to the media draw of your event, invite a local celebrity, elected official, or VIP. It can be the Mayor, Governor, your Member of Congress, a local news anchor or weather reporter, or a business or community leader. Ask them to be an AmeriCorps Member for a Day – or an hour – to get a first-hand look at how AmeriCorps works. Work with their communications staff on media outreach. In addition to attracting media, this will also provide an opportunity for you to build support for your organization with elected officials and the business community.
4. **Profile a Member:** Tell the AmeriCorps story through the eyes of one member. Newspapers are always looking for compelling human interest stories. Do any of your members stand out? Perhaps a member who overcame great odds to serve, or was served by an AmeriCorps member when they were younger and now wants to return the good deed. Or someone who was inspired to join AmeriCorps member by a parent who was in VISTA or in the Peace Corps, or a grandparent in the Civilian Conservation Corps. If several members of a family have served with AmeriCorps, that can be the basis of a great story.
5. **Honor Alums:** AmeriCorps Week is the perfect opportunity to invite AmeriCorps alums back for an event. Encourage them to be available to the media to share their stories of service and reconnect with the people they helped in your program. Make sure to include information on what the alums are doing now and how their AmeriCorps service continues to impact their lives.

6. **Honor AmeriCorps VISTA and VISTA Alums:** Invite VISTA alums to join in your celebrations and events, and encourage them to speak to school groups and service organizations about their VISTA experience. Highlight sustainable accomplishments that continue to impact your community. Recruiting VISTA alums is also a great way to expand your volunteer pool.
7. **Highlight Recruitment:** It's high school and college graduation season. Grads are looking for what comes next, and the media is looking to write graduation stories. Use this opportunity to highlight how more grads are going into public service programs like AmeriCorps. Show how this is part of a growing community service trend among today's young people – an emerging civic generation inspired into action by 9-11, Hurricane Katrina, and the growth of service-learning in schools. Include the facts that teen volunteering is double what it was in the 1980s and that college student volunteering is on the rise. Emphasize the career benefits of joining AmeriCorps – how AmeriCorps members gain leadership, problem-solving, and management skills that can jumpstart their careers and expose them to new fields.
8. **Highlight the Convergence of Support:** More and more we are seeing a convergence of support from all sectors that service is the solution to our toughest challenges. Bipartisan support for national service is stronger than ever – from the White House and Congress to Governors and Mayors. Businesses are recognizing that corporate citizenship is good for the community and the bottom line. During AmeriCorps Week, highlight how this convergence is happening in your community by pointing to the government and corporate leaders who support and invest in AmeriCorps, and show how this is part of a national trend.
9. **Write a Letter to the Editor or Op-ed:** Letters to the Editor are one of the most popular parts of the newspaper. They are also easy to write and get placed. Keep them short and personal. Write about your AmeriCorps experience, or thank AmeriCorps members for their service. Ask people or organizations that your AmeriCorps members have assisted to write letters relating their positive experiences. You can also submit a longer op-ed column. An op-ed can be written by a staff member, an AmeriCorps member, or someone who has benefitted from the service of an AmeriCorps member. Check out the editorial pages of your local newspaper for information on the submission process.
10. **Get on Radio or TV:** As you reach out to the media for AmeriCorps Week, don't forget public affairs and talk shows on your local TV and radio stations. Contact your local public radio, talk radio station, or a popular radio show (drive-time radio shows are a particularly good idea) and ask to be a guest on one of their shows. Try to get on more than one show, keeping in mind the demographics of the station and the specific show. Likewise, find the public affairs shows on your network affiliates and cable channels, including the public access channels. Offer all stations AmeriCorps video including the PSAs and program videos in the AmeriCorps Presentation Kit to run during the segment. The PSAs are more likely to be used if a station knows it's important to you.