Americorps Quarterly

October 12, 2007

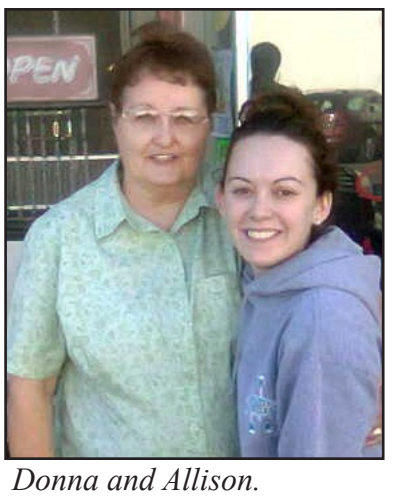
Volume 1, Issue 3

Beyond Our Generation

by Allison McKiernan

I sat next to Donna Kellum at a Custer County Council on Aging meeting. When she heard that I was an AmeriCorps VISTA she was immediately interested in what I was doing. After I explained my position she told me that she had been a VISTA from 1974 through 1976. Here I was going through my elevator speech and explaining VISTA like she had no idea what I was doing; meanwhile she knew what VISTA was over thirty years before I did.

When the opportunity to write a story for the AmeriCorps newsletter arose I immediately thought of Donna. I met her again at the next Council on Aging meeting and asked her if she would be available to meet with me and if she would mind me writing a story about her VISTA experience for the newsletter.



Donna and Allison.

She agreed to meet with me the following week.

Donna and I met for coffee and she told me about her two years as VISTA and I told her about my experience so far. She had read about VISTA in a newspaper article and interviewed directly with her work program site. She served as a VISTA at the Glasgow mental health center for two years and was then hired on as a staff member. She and her coworkers interviewed people from eastern Montana who had been institutionalized at Boulder hot springs and then helped them return to self-sufficiency in the Glasgow community. She told me, "It was the most fun and interesting job" and shared anecdotes from her experience. I knew that she really valued the memories she had collected over those two years of service.

Donna recounted her time as a VISTA counseling the warm springs returnees as a "truly gifted learning experience" that was very rewarding. "Being in the right program gives your heart and your soul growth, which enriches your life."

We're making some changes here folks! We want you to read this newsletter, so let us know what we can do to make it more entertaining and informative. We want your contributions in terms of ideas, articles, photos and calender events. If there's something you're planning or some event you need volunteers for...lets us know and we'll get it out.

Send your ideas/articles/photos/calender events to Ashley at astevick@mtlsa.org.

Introducing Fall 2007 ACMAC

by Tina Maples

The leaves are changing colors, there is snow on the mountaintops, and the school buses are once again slowing down the morning commute; autumn is definitely in the air. Alongside of the change of season comes a new AmeriCorps Advisory Council class. The AmeriCorps Advisory Council, also known as ACMAC, is an inter-corps council that represents all of the Montana AmeriCorps programs. ACMAC members raise awareness on the issues that AmeriCorps members are working on around the state, as well as organize four national service days to promote volunteer participation in their respective towns. Below are the names of the new ACMAC members and information about their AmeriCorps project sites.

Ebony Carter is a Community in Action VISTA in Sidney, MT. Ebony is working on an expansion project to get a Communities in Action VISTA in the communities of Terry and Fort Peck. She is a member of the ACMAC Public Relations committee.

Emily Clark is serving as a Montana Campus Corps Network Office team leader in Missoula, MT. She works as a support system for the team leaders that represent nine colleges and universities across Montana. Emily is a member of the ACMAC Ambassador committee.

Geno Donney is one of the Fall 2007 Co-Coordinators of ACMAC. He is currently working with the National Technology Assistance Project sponsored by Montana Legal Services in Helena, MT.

Heather Hass is a Campus-Corps AmeriCorps Team Leader at Carrol College in Helena. She provides support to part-time AmeriCorps members and also provides service opportunities in the Helena community for Carrol students. Heather is a member of the ACMAC Service Days committee.

Tina Maples is currently serving as a VISTA at the Tri-County Network against Domestic and Sexual Violence, specifically focusing on the S.A.V.E. (Starting Against Violence Early: A Teenage Dating Initiative) program, in Livingston, MT. She is a member of the ACMAC Public Relations committee.

Annie Martin joins ACMAC from her Livingston, Montana site with Big Brothers Big Sisters. Her primary projects this year include building a new website, creating on online format for the organization's newsletter, and a building a new database to aid them in tracking their results. Annie is serving as the chairperson for the Service Days committee.

Katie McKeown is one of the Fall 2007 Co-Coordinators of ACMAC. In addition to this role, Katie is working on the YES Expansion during her VISTA service with the Montana Conservation Corps through the Prevention Resource Center.



Photo by Annie Martin.



Photo curtosy of Silke Popp.

Allison McKiernan is a VISTA working with both RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) and ROCKS (Raising our Community Kids Safely) in Miles City, MT. Allison is also a Campus Compact volunteer through Miles City Community College. She is a member of the ACMAC Public Relations committee.

Amanda Megyesi-McCave is a VISTA working with the Montana Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs in Billings. In addition to her service role, Amanda acts as the chair of the Ambassador committee.

Max A. Miller is volunteering as a grant writer and fundraiser for the Flathead Food Bank in Kalispell, MT. Max is a member of the ACMAC Ambassador committee and is currently working on a Realtor and Harvest Food Drive for Make a Difference Day.

Silke Popp is a VISTA for Montana Legal Services in Billings, MT. Silke is an assistant to the state-wide consumer protection attorney for Montana Legal Service and is also developing educational material on consumer advocacy for reservations and local organizations. Silke is a member of the ACMAC Public Relations committee.

Julie Stevens is the Member Outreach Coordinator with the AmeriCorps Literacy Support Corps. She mentors members in their service performance, helps with program development and planning, facilitates trainings, and creates program newsletters. Julie is a member of the ACMAC Service Days committee.

Ashley Stevick is a VISTA for the Helena Relationship Violence Council in Helena, MT. This council seeks to identify and close gaps in communication within the spectrum of Domestic Violence. She is also the chair of the Public Relations committee for ACMAC.

Abby Zent, a second-year VISTA, is a VISTA leader at the Prevention Resource Center in Helena, MT. Abby is a member of the ACMAC Ambassador committee.

The next issue of Americorps Quarterly will go out on January 11, 2008. Please send your submissions to Ashley at astevick@mtlsa.org by December 21, 2007. Remember, we're looking for stories, events and photos so get creative and don't be shy!

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We'd like you to submit stories about your extraordinary experiences, events you've planned or been involved with, businesses that have been especially helpful to Americoprs members and their projects, etc. Send your stories to Ashley at astevick@mtlsa.org. Thank you!

Never in My Wildest Dreams

by Max Miller

Have you ever wondered where your next meal would come from? Nearly 150,000 people in the Flathead Valley have at one time or another experienced an unsure circumstance regarding food insecurity.

The Flathead Food Bank in Kalispell has been serving those who need an emergency source of food for the past twenty-five years. I began with the Food Bank in June of 2007 as one who would help the Executive Director write Grant Requests and Fundraising.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have ever thought about working in a food bank. The past few months have provided me with a completely different insight as to how individuals need emergency help. It's really wonderful to see the smile on children's faces when their birthday comes and we have a decorated cake rescued from one of our local grocers, ready for candles and the party.

I recall just recently we had a "Back to School" chocolate chip cookie about the size of a large pie. I offered it to one of our clients who had brought in her two small children, possibly because she was unable to pay a baby-sitter or unemployed.

The smile that cookie brought to the faces of those children will live forever in my mind. Often times high heating bills, unplanned medical expenses and things such as that create a need for this emergency source of food.

My AmeriCorps*VISTA service at the Flathead Food Bank will end in January, 2008. It has been an experience I will never forget.

The Staff and Volunteers have been very helpful in allowing me to learn the food bank techniques. Their plan is to expand their facility either by purchase or lease of a larger building in which they may serve more Clients.

I trust my efforts as a Grant Writer and Fundraiser for this organization has helped them succeed.

Max can be reached at flatheadfoodbankmax@yahoo.com

Hospitality at MLC

by Ebony Carter

Americorps members were subjected to a wonderful treat and surprise as recipients of volunteerism and hospitality when the Montana Learning Center (MLC) opened their color coded cabins and kitchen for the annual Americorps Member Advisory Council (ACMAC) retreat, the weekend of September 7, 2007. Located on the upper impoundment of the Missouri River at Canyon Ferry Lake in Helena, Montana, the MLC is an environmentally based educational facility that promotes the expansion of mathematical and scientific learning for students, teachers and Montana citizens.

In exchange for a small service project of performing minor external "renovations" on a few cabins, ACMAC was provided with free housing for the retreat weekend. Scraping, puttying, priming and painting cabins allotted an opportunity for Montana Americorps members to engage and interact on a personal level with each other outside of the mandatory trainings and conferences. Montana may be small in population, inhabiting less than one million people but its huge landmass makes it difficult for Americorps members, who volunteer on a full time basis, to visit other members spread throughout the state.

Jeannie and Mel Barber, a high school sweetheart couple married for over forty years, served as hosts for the weekend and were an added bonus. With Mel's playful spirit and Jeannie's bubbly laugh, it was the perfect addition for a day of cabin "refurbishing". Mel is a retired business owner currently working part-time at the MLC. He gave a brief tutorial on how to touchup the cabins and put in a helping hand as well. ACMAC members adamantly protested this once it was revealed he underwent heart surgery five weeks prior to the retreat. He concealed this very well, possessing more strength than the whole ACMAC team, carrying two ladders at a time along with paint buckets while scraping, priming and painting houses along with everyone else. His lovely wife Jeannie didn't seem too shocked by this. "That's just him," she simply stated with an affirming shrug. Just goes to show you can't keep a good Mel down.

Mrs. Barber helped ACMAC through other means, inside the kitchen prepping meals: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. When ACMAC thanked her for the delicious meals she prepared, it was revealed she initially wasn't supposed to cook. When the regular cook quit unexpectedly, Jeannie explained she really didn't have a choice in the matter. She knew MLC made a commitment to open the facility to ACMAC for the weekend and since she is familiar with Americorps and its mission, she said she was glad to help out. With a giggle, she adds "He [Mel] volunteered me", and she politely turned back into the kitchen to prepare lunch.

At the retreats closing, ACMAC presented the Barbers with a very much deserved thank you card along with a standing ovation in honor of their hospitality. Blushing, and yet thankful, the couple clearly appreciated the gesture. "You guys are great", replies Mel, "we just don't get enough kids around here".

The Montana Learning Center and the Barber's are one of many examples of the support Montana Americorps members receive on a daily basis. On behalf of all Americorps members, ACMAC would like to extend their undying gratitude and appreciation to all the organizations, communities and individuals who help support Americorps in their service of volunteerism.

For more information about the Montana Learning Center, please visit their website at www.montanalearning.org or call (406) 475-3638

Upcoming Events Around Montana

Helena

Dinner at Ashley and Allie's
October 19 from 7- 10 at 705 Saddle Drive.

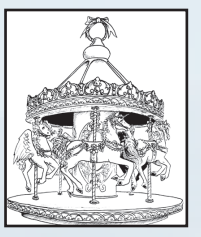


This is a community building event for the January and July VISTA classes. (We decided we don't hang out enough.) All Americorps members, past and present, are also welcome. Bring a dish to share.

"Sweet Repeats" Clothing Sale at the YWCA
October 20 from 9 am - 1 pm

This sale includes gently used business attire for women. This is a great opportunity for Americorps members looking for professional clothing. Volunteers are also needed. Contact Nikki at nhemans@mtlsa.org

Make a Difference Day
October 27



Volunteers are preparing Comfort Kits for women who have been through rape kits at St. Pete's Hospital at the YWCA. Various service projects are also occuring at the YWCA including an inventory of the building. Carroll students are bringing the kids from God's Love Family Transitional Center to the carousel and Carroll football game. Conservation Corps members and other volunteers are cleaning up yards for enderly folks around town. If you'd like to help, contact Ashley at astevick@mtlsa.org

Open House at the Montana Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
October 30 from 4-7

Free food!

January Vista Graduation
December 10th at the Red Lion Colonial Inn

Paint the Town Pink
February 2

Formal gala to raise money for the Florence Crettenton Home.
Volunteers needed!
Contact Megan at megand@florencecrittenton.org

Bozeman

PRC Quarterly Report Due
October 15

Make a Difference Day
October 27



"Needs for Treats"
Community volunteers are collecting toiletries and cleaning supplies for local shelters using donation boxes throughout town. Contact Katie at katie@mtcorps.org for more information.

Bozeman Region Conservation Corps Crew Member Graduation
October 31

Montana Conservation Corps Crew Leader Graduation
November 15

Bouler, MT

Great Falls

Make a Difference Day
October 27

Night at the Museum
First ever overnight event at the Children's Museum where kids sleepover and watch Night at the Museum! If you'd like information about setting up such an event contact Mike at mclivers@gmail.com

Livingston

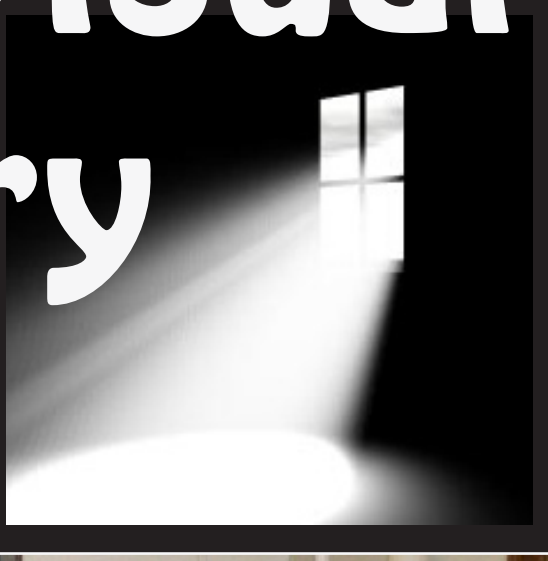
Make a Difference Day
October 27

"Needs for Treats"
Kids who are trick or treating can collect soap, shampoo, lotion, toothpaste, etc. for local shelters. Contact Annie at anniem@bbb-sparkcounty.org for more information.

Please submit events you're organizing or involved with to Ashley at astevick@mtlsa.org. If you need volunteers for an upcoming event tell us about it! In your submission please include location, date, time, contact information and a short description. Thanks!

The Visual Gallery

Send your photo submissions to Ashley at astevick@mtlsa.org





Helena Americorps members presenting Martha Eberle with a cake on her 22nd birthday.



Abby Zent and Geno Donney at the Govenor's Award for Civic Engagement ceremony. Abby recieved the Govenor's Award for Civic Engagement for national service for her work as a VISTA in Great Falls in 2006.

Current and former Americorps members volunteered on September 22, 2007 for the the Way Home event in Helena. Dana Laboy, the Community Services Ministries Coordinator for Good Samaritan's, organized the event the last two years. On Januarty 31, 2007 volunteers conducted a Point in Time Survey of Homeless individuals in Helena. They located 516 people. The Way Home event this year served over 120 homeless individuals. Service providers signed up individuals and families for housing, medical services, veterans benefits, food stamps and more. Food bags were given away by the Helena Food Share, as were winter coats and boots. Socks and pants were also given away and a warm meal was served.





Americorps VISTAs at the close of In-Service Training in beautiful Big Sky, Montana on September 7, 2007.