



AmeriCorps Project YES!

Operated by Northwestern Settlement

Upcoming Events

- 5/17: Recruitment begins!
- 5/31: Memorial Day
- 6/18: Last day of CPS
- 7/31: Last day of 09-10 program year

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AmeriCorps Project YES! is a proud program of Northwestern Settlement. More information on all Settlement programs can be found at our website: www.nush.org

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Edited by Esther Lindström

Settlement Celebrates Literacy at MLK Day Fair

Carl Hay

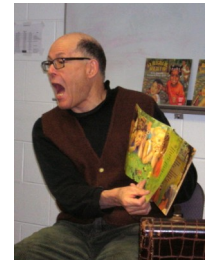
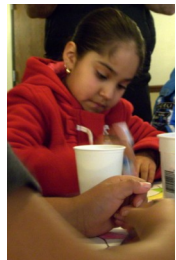
Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service was certainly a day *on*, rather than a day *off*, at Burnside Hall in Northwestern Settlement. On Monday, January 18, over 200 volunteers and children from the community participated in *Dream On, Read On*, the 3rd Annual MLK Day Literacy Fair organized by Project YES! members.

The fair was jam-packed with fun activities, including an interactive Winnie the Pooh scavenger hunt, Literary Jeopardy!, and performances of Dr. Seuss's *The Sneetches*. Children and volunteers commented that the play was a perfect way to communicate messages of tolerance and diversity to younger audiences.

Local children's authors Sallie Wolf and W. Nicola Lisa, along with playwright Loren Crawford, led engaging readings and workshops for participants. Children who completed three activities were sent home with LitKits that contained books, school supplies, family literacy information, and other fun prizes.

After the fair ended and all the kids went home, volunteers enjoyed a delicious lunch donated by local busi-

nesses and reflected on their service, prompted by Dr. King's "Drum Major Instinct" speech. AmeriCorps Project YES! is thankful to all who donated books for participants, food for volunteers, and time before or during the fair to ensure a meaningful event. The day successfully exhibited the inextricable bond between education, self-determination, and equality. Project YES! is proud to continue this tradition in years to come.



Session "Shedds" Light on Education Resources

Maggie Bryde

Earlier this winter, the Project YES! team ventured into watery territory during a visit to the Shedd Aquarium for an in-service training. Shedd's enthusiastic Teacher Programs Coordinator, Amy Christiansen, discussed educational, field trip, and volunteer opportunities at the aquarium.

Christiansen described a wide variety of programs, including Animals in Action, Lakeshore Biology, and Whale Adven-

tures, educational programs catered to different age groups, explaining that all programming provided by the Shedd is aligned with Illinois science standards.

In addition to the exciting aquatic educational programs, Project YES! members were excited to hear that there are also a plethora of volunteer opportunities for students who want explore the world of the aquarium. Younger volunteers

can participate in special events or sign up to be greeters, while older and qualified students can look into volunteering to work with some of the animals, learning how to care for and feed them. Volunteers can also aspire to volunteer as a scuba diver in the Shedd's Caribbean reef! By the end of the day, many new opportunities were discovered, and the Project YES! team had a fun day getting their feet wet at the Shedd Aquarium.

Drive Provides Warmth for Young Scholars

In December, the Rowe Elementary Project YES! team organized Coats for Scholars, a coat drive to ensure that all Rowe scholars had warm coats for the winter. On December 18, some 80 Rowe scholars received a brand new coat, hat, and gloves, and 40 coats were donated to the Settlement. Individual coat donations came from many generous individuals around the Chicago area, as well as a coat drive event at Suite Lounge. Duchossois Industries and Bethel United Church of Christ, both of Elmhurst, IL, contributed monetary donations for the cause.

The Rowe team spent hours matching each coat to the personalities of the specific scholars in need of new outerwear. The scholars did not know they were receiving new warm coats to wear for the rest of the winter season, as evidenced by expressions of confusion turning to excitement.

One particular scholar's reaction epitomized the impact of receiving a new coat. Smaller than all her other classmates, she has the vibrant personality that more than makes up for her petite stature. Prior to the coat drive, she had come to school each day wearing a lightweight oversized coat. During dismissal on the 18th, she was playing with her fellow classmates, waiting for her father to

pick her up. I came across the blue and brown heavy coat with a fur collar that had been set aside for her, and walked to where she was playing to give her the coat. She said, "that's not my coat." Her teacher replied, "Now it is!" Her face was still one of confusion, while a smile slowly came across her face. When I finished passing out coats, I walked around the room and saw the

same little scholar. At this point, she was wearing her new coat, striped fleece gloves, hat, and scarf. The most important part of her new look was the giant smile across her face.

Half an hour later, I again saw this particular scholar wearing her coat and accessories outside with her father. As I walked by her, I told her that I loved her new coat; she just smiled. Her father replied to me, "She is so happy right now."

Not only did the coats given to the scholars ensure that the scholars of Rowe Elementary would be warm this winter, but they gave them something to be proud of and call their own.



Join the National Service Movement!

Project YES! is now accepting applications for the 2010-2011 program year.

For more information and to apply, visit www.americorps.gov



Project YES! Partners with CARC

During a Monday meeting in February, AmeriCorps Project YES! members volunteered at the CARC, an organization that serves individuals with developmental disabilities across the lifespan through a variety of programs.

Project YES! had the privilege of joining CARC clients at their Westtown Center to create a mural incorporating paint and pieces of fabric. The outcome was colorful and whimsical. After the day of service,

members serving at Noble Street College Prep partnered with the CARC to develop a service project for high school students titled "Puppet Parade," in which students and clients collaboratively prepared and performed a puppet show. Everyone involved enjoyed the opportunity to share their creativity and make connections with each other.

The CARC's values and visions state that the CARC "promotes and fosters life-

times with more meaningful possibilities for people with developmental disabilities of all ages and abilities." Project YES! was honored to learn from and support the CARC in their important mission.

For more information about CARC and their programs, please visit their website at <http://www.carccenter.org>

Project YES! members connect with CARC clients at the project

Micaela Moran



Alumni Spotlight: Patrick Bader ('04-'06)



1. When did you serve in AmeriCorps Project YES!? At which site?

2004-2005 Noble Street College Prep, 2005-2006 AmeriCorps Leader

2. Where have you been since? What have you been doing?

After serving and then working in Chicago for four years after undergrad, I moved out to the Seattle area to pursue a Master's degree in Education. As a part of my program, I com-

pleted a one year residency teaching outdoors and living at a school named Island-Wood. In June I will complete my Master's at the University of Washington.

3. What are your goals/areas of interest for the future?

This summer I will be moving back to the Midwest to teach high school in Milwaukee as a corps member in Teach For America.

4. Which skills from your

AmeriCorps year do you use on an ongoing basis?

Learning how to connect with a group of students. I still somehow find myself doing lots of teambuilders, as well.

5. What else would you like newsletter readers to know?

I'm really happy to know that the community gardening project that my corps year started is still going strong.

Adventures Abound at Pulaski Day Bazaar

On the first Monday of March every year, CPS students observe Casimir Pulaski Day, honoring a Polish-American cavalry officer in the Revolutionary War.

Project YES! plans an annual fair for Settlement youth on Pulaski Day, engaging them in educational, artistic, and recreational activities. This year's participants enjoyed strengthening their problem-solving, teamwork, math, literacy, creativity, and motor skills through games, crafts,



Project YES! members and Michigan volunteers support the development of Settlement youth on Pulaski Day.



Esther Lindström

quizzes, and even a pirate adventure!

We were pleased to host volunteers from the University of Michigan's Alternative Spring Break program, who donated their time to lead activities. Some volunteers were also enrolled in AmeriCorps programs at their university.

AmeriCorps Project YES! is proud of the safe and enriching opportunities we provide to Chicago youth throughout the year.

Alumni Spotlight: Lisa Friedlen ('06-'07)

1. When did you serve in AmeriCorps Project YES!? At which site?

2006-2007, Noble Street College Prep.

2. Where have you been since? What have you been doing?

I completed my master's in social work from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration and obtained my type 73 certificate for school social work. I am cur-

rently working at Noble Day Care as a lead teacher in the toddler classroom.

3. What are your goals/areas of interest for the future?

My goal is to become a school social worker in Chicago.

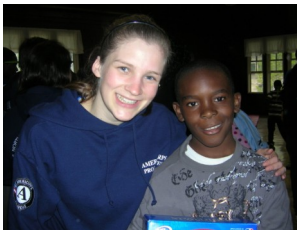
4. Which skills from your AmeriCorps year do you use on an ongoing basis?

I learned a great deal about working as part of a team in AmeriCorps. This is very useful

in being one of the founding staff members at Noble Day Care, as it has been important to learn from and build off of one another.

I also learned a lot about program development in Project YES!, which has been crucial in developing curriculum and activities for my classroom.





Why We Serve: On Modest Ambitions

Nathan Hopkins

I came to national service two years out of an alma mater that has a reputation for producing idealists (this year, it ranked first among its peers for producing Peace Corps volunteers) and immediately after earning an MA in political philosophy. My decision to join AmeriCorps, then, was initially motivated by grand social and political ideals. I had the youthful optimism that my baby-boomer father warned me about: faith in my generation's ability to make a substantial, progressive impact on the world. I'd like to think that, as I reflected on my service in those first few weeks, I never stooped to clichés about "changing the world," but I'm sure it happened. Probably more than once.

Don't think eight months in AmeriCorps have made me a cynic. They haven't. I am still just as optimistic and progressive as I was when I began my year of service. However, my idealism no longer plays a major role in my day-to-day motivation to serve. My desire to correct alienating social structures is still an important part of my identity, but it isn't what gets me out of bed at 6am on cold, dark Chicago mornings. It takes a very special kind of person to live on ideas alone. Most of us need more concrete forms of sustenance; we need successes, however small, that we can actually point to. These are what I have learned to appreciate over the past months and they have become the main motivation behind my service.

When I leave Noble Street College Prep today at 5:30pm, "the world" will be almost exactly as it was when I arrived this morning: an oil rig will still be pouring crude into the Gulf of Mexico, Arizona will still have a controversial new immigration law, our national and

global distributions of wealth will still be profoundly unequal, and so on ad infinitum. What *will* be different when I leave at the end of the day is that Alejandra will have learned about Japanese-American internment during World War II, Alex will be able to find the area of a cone, and Jessica will have a better essay to turn in to that scholarship committee.

These accomplishments – small though they may be in the face of staggering social pathologies – are real and impactful. They are not purely aesthetic gestures, tragically beautiful affirmations of being in the face of inevitable defeat; these small accomplishments actually matter. Perhaps learning about the internment of Japanese-Americans will set Alejandra on the path to becoming an important human rights lawyer. Or perhaps it will simply make her a bit more likely to get a decent grade in US history this year. Either way, it makes some positive difference.

Bertolt Brecht puts his finger on this idea nicely in his poem "A Bed for the Night:"

*I hear that in New York
At the corner of 26th Street
and Broadway
A man stands every evening
during the winter months
And gets beds for the
homeless there
By appealing to passersby.*

...
*A few people have a bed
for the night
For a night the wind is
kept from them
The snow meant for them
falls on the roadway
But it won't change the
world
It won't improve relations
among men
It will not shorten the age
of exploitation.*

Brecht, the orthodox Marxist, would never renounce the fundamental importance of his large-scale, world-historical goal (ending "the age of exploitation"), but such idealism does not blind him to the significance of more modest achievements (finding a temporary shelter for one lucky homeless person). Brecht knew that an idealism which fails to appreciate the significance of the *actual* – even in its most humble presentations – is only a thinly veiled nihilism. *This kind of outlook is, I think, essential for an ethic of service: for, while it would be naïve to neglect the political, refusing the daily nourishment of small successes can emaciate one's passion for service. A garden tended, a child taught, a bed for the night: this is not the work of revolution, but it is the heart of service.*

Finally, I am emboldened by my hope that the division between aureate idealisms and middling victories is not so absolute. As an AmeriCorps volunteer, I am not standing alone on the snowy corner of 26th and Broadway. I am part of a larger movement, a movement which, I believe, encourages a sense of responsibility and solidarity across traditional boundaries of race and class, and a movement which therefore is laying a foundation for social action that could have the potential to change the world.

Tomorrow I will get up at 5:45am so I can help administer the fitness tests at Noble Street College Prep. It will not shorten the age of exploitation, it won't improve relations among men, but it will do a little to encourage healthy behaviors in kids, and it will do a little to teach me about what it means to be a part of a community, and that is enough to earn my time.

AmeriCorps Project YES!: Getting Things Done in Chicago

PROJECT YES! connects caring adults with youth in and around the West Town community through mentorship, educational, service, artistic, and recreational activities in order to support their academic achievement, provide them with positive alternatives to destructive behaviors, and foster an ethic of service in the entire community.



Clockwise from top left, Members to Remember Maggie Bryde (February), Kaci Kepferle (January), Ashley Mauter (November), Gillian Fealy (December), and Diana Han (March).

Thanks for representing our program well!

Members to Remember

Flexibility: Ashley Mauter

Project YES! members nominated Ashley as the November Member to Remember because of her outgoing nature and proactive approach to service.

Ashley continually serves as a leader among our team, setting high standards in classroom and service programming. Her flexibility and kindness are appreciated by students, peers, and staff, alike.

Initiative: Gillian Fealy

Gillian recognized a need for coats for scholars at her site, and she responded by organizing a fundraiser and in-kind donations. Gillian's drive motivated others to gather for an important cause, and Rowe Elementary scholars benefited, as a result.

In the words of a teammate, Gillian's efforts demonstrate that she "truly is impactful."

Leadership: Kaci Kepferle

Kaci served as the logistics head for the MLK Day Literacy Fair on January 18. Her commitment to the project was evident in the planning and execution of the event.

Fellow members recognized Kaci as a "fearless leader," characterized by strong delegation, communication, and contagious dedication.

Dedication: Maggie Bryde

Maggie was nominated as the February Member to Remember, in honor of her commitment to service. Maggie has been a great source of support to her Noble site team, as well as the larger group.

Maggie's initiative is also evident in her role as head of publicity for our spring service projects. Both events are likely to be successful, as a result!

Teamwork: Diana Han

Diana brings great enthusiasm to projects, raising morale among her peers. Diana and her Polaris site team worked together to create engaging adventures for youth during Pulaski Day and Intersession.

Diana's positive attitude during such events is noted by peers, modeling "ideal volunteerism and leadership" at the CARC mural painting project.



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