

SUMMER 2009

Project YES!

A NEW YEAR BEGINS

As the 2008/2009 program year comes to a close, AmeriCorps staff are busy in the office recruiting a new batch of members and bidding adieu to an amazing group of Project YES! members. While wrapping up the year, we want to take a look back and congratulate the 08-09 members on their impressive accomplishments over the past year.

Remembering this year's volunteer projects, the staff is blown away by the creativity and magnitude of the service opportunities provided by the 08/09 members. This year's members created 64 volunteer projects for their

school sites and the West Town Community. In total, these projects recruited 630 youth volunteers and 303 adult volunteers. Some highlights included 826 CHI Writing Workshops at Noble and Pritzker College Prep, handing out medals at a race by Girls on the Run at Polaris Charter Academy, and a workshop for the Juniors at the Settlement about the dangers of dating violence.

A big thanks goes to Project YES! members for their hard work, and we look eagerly towards an equally talented and enthusiastic Corps in the coming service term.

NUSH Summer Adventure

Summer is here, and at NUSH that means Summer Adventure. While many sites are in summer school, NUSH's School Age program has a full-day summer camp from 9:00 to 4:30, and we're busier than ever. Our days are filled with art projects, cooking activities, games, and outdoor activities. We are having fun playing at the park, in the gym, and at Pulaski Park Pool. Every week we all get to go on a field trip. Trips include going to the movies to see *Up!*, Lincoln Park Zoo, Millennium Park, a water park, and more. AmeriCorps members get to be with one age group all day, which is quite different than our school-year schedule when we split our time between Head Start and after-school programming. It's tiring being on the go, but a great chance to do different things with the kids. Also, we still have food pantry Monday through Thursday, with Meat Day of course!

by Elizabeth Stroz—AmeriCorps Project YES! Member—NUSH 2008/2009



Member Spotlight



Conley Wouters

Frankfort, IL
University of Illinois - English

Site: Noble Street College Prep

Biggest Success:

Co-founding The Noble Street News

Biggest Challenge:

Working at an almost all Latino high school and not speaking any Spanish

Plans after AmeriCorps:

English PhD @ Brandeis University. Then, if all that goes ok, I'll teach English at a college.

Advice for incoming AmeriCorps:

Oh, just smile and be yourself. And have fun. These clichés, it turns out, were pretty much the only guidelines I set for myself, and when I was abiding by them I found the whole thing pretty fun and rewarding.



Amy Kaye MacInnes

Omaha, Nebraska
Iowa State University- Biology

Site: Polaris Charter Academy

Biggest Success:

Personal: Building confidence and skills such as flexibility, patience, planning and communication; At school: Helping students learn phonic sounds so they can improve reading skills.

Biggest Challenge:

Coming into the program without a background in education was challenging; however, by teaching myself and working with my team, I was able to become more effective in classroom management, as well as more comfortable working with the students.

Plans After AmeriCorps:

I caught the AmeriCorps bug and am currently applying to another program!

Advice for Incoming AmeriCorps

Know what you want to get out of your AmeriCorps experience and make it what you want it to be. Be ready to expect the unexpected and never lose sight of who you are so that you can maintain confidence as you serve others.

Hidden talent:

Singing songs from musicals!

Kenya Butts

Southside of Chicago
University of Illinois
Champaign—Political Science

Site:

Rowe-Clark Math and Science Academy

Biggest Success:

Developing great relationship with the students.

Biggest Challenge:

Creating service projects that students actually show up to.

Plans after AmeriCorps:

I will be working part-time at Rowe-Clark. I will be finishing my last year of my MSW and doing my internship at the Arts of Living program at Clemente High School.

Advice for incoming AmeriCorps:

Just relax and take each day one at a time. Create the experience you want to have.

Hidden talent:

I'm a very skilled multi-tasker.



Lindsay Giovannitti

Dallas, TX

Indiana University - Speech and Hearing Sciences



Site: Noble Street College Prep

Biggest Success:

Helping the Class of 2009 stay on track with their academics. Watching them walk across the stage on graduation day was a truly inspiring and moving moment. Their success was my success.

Biggest Challenge:

Staying motivated was difficult at times. Even though you're a volunteer, you do real work and have a real job. Others don't always see that, and it can become frustrating and discouraging.

Plans After AmeriCorps:

I have accepted a full-time position at Noble Street! I will be working with the Senior Team once again and provide student support to struggling students.

Advice for Incoming AmeriCorps:

Don't feel bad about accepting favors and meals from friends. At first you'll care and feel kind of guilty. Then you'll realize just how little money you have and quickly get over it.



Elizabeth Stroz

Chicago, IL

(Jefferson Park)

Sociology at DePaul

and Community Counseling at Loyola.

Site : NUSH!

Biggest Success

Working with younger students and realizing how rewarding it is for me.

Biggest Challenge

Working with lots of people who all have very different styles.

Plans After AmeriCorps:

I will be a Teacher Assistant at Rowe Elementary, the Settlement Charter School.

Advice for Incoming AmeriCorps:

Communicate with your site team from the beginning. It makes things go easier.

Bridget Noonan

Stevens Point, WI

University of Minnesota Duluth:

Secondary Education -

Teaching Communication Arts and Literature



Site: Noble Street College Prep

Biggest Success:

I was lucky enough to coach the JV Girls' Basketball team at Noble. I never thought I would be able to connect with the girls on a level that I did. I wouldn't change that for anything

Biggest Challenge:

Getting to know what role is played in the classrooms, it's hard coming as a certified teacher and then being similar to a teacher's aide. However, through talking with the teachers, I was able to take on a role in the classroom that went beyond being an aide; I was able to connect with the students.

Plans after AmeriCorps:

Thanks to serving at Noble, I was able to get a job at one of their other campuses: Golder College Prep, where I will be the new Junior English/Composition teacher.

Advice for incoming AmeriCorps:

Don't wait for something to happen. Be proactive, if you talk to the teachers or staff you work with, you will get so much more out of the program. Try to be as involved as possible, the more you do at your site and with the program, the more pride you will get. Time flies, so make sure to make the best of it. You will also meet some cool people along the way, so keep an open mind.

CHANGE

Walk around UIC College Prep High School next year, and you'll see a tile mural celebrating the school's mission: "Make a Positive Multigenerational Change." Coordinated by Project YES! AmeriCorps members and designed by all students and staff, this mural represents something big at UICCP—the desire to change for the better. Project YES! has been a part of that mission at UICCP from the start.

UIC College Prep has accomplished a lot its first year, much of which was made possible by the help of its three AmeriCorps members. One Pro-

ject YES! member taught an advisory course, working with students on issues like leadership, responsibility, and organization. Another worked on a Psychology enrichment course, teaching a small group of students the ins and outs of the human mind on Saturday afternoons. Another AmeriCorps member helped establish the Algebra Success Tutoring Program, bringing 15 UIC College students into the building to help nearly a third of our student body twice a week on a subject that still scares many adults.

But maybe more than academic progress, the AmeriCorps presence at UICCP has been a key

part of making the school a community. Project YES! AmeriCorps members have done everything from running a Holiday Toy Drive and teaching Piano Lessons, to starting a Student Council and coaching softball. Without AmeriCorps, UICCP may have seen a year without school dances, organized community service trips, and a mural celebrating what the school is all about.

That's change we're proud to be a part of.

*By Jessica Gayda
AmeriCorps Member
UIC College Prep 2008—2009*

Rowe-Clark Round-up

Although the school year has ended and summer has set in, there have still been some exciting things happening at Rowe-Clark during the past few weeks. During the last week of classes, the Student Government organized a Karaoke & Ice Cream Social for the students who completed the required community service hours for the semester. The event featured vocal performances from several of our school's finest voices. Following the social, the boys' and girls' basketball teams faced off against the staff team in a Students vs. Faculty basketball game.

While the students led for most of the first half, the staff ultimately took

control and came back to win. Moreover, a number of students organized informal volleyball games and water-balloon tossing contests.

The students and staff had additional opportunities to participate in athletic endeavors with each other during the Field Day events that took place at Garfield Park after final exams. These events included staff-student competitions in softball and tug-of-war and a rugby game between the freshmen and sophomores.

This summer, numerous students are taking summer school classes at Rowe-Clark in a wide range of subjects. The AmeriCorps members here are helping to

teach these classes. Kenya is co-teaching a math class, and Lindsey and Rob are teaching a community service class that will involve two service projects with community organizations. In addition, Kenya is training with a group of students to prepare for the Chicago Rock N Roll Half Marathon and the Chicago Marathon. They are running lots of miles out in the sun, so they will be ready rock their competitors during the events!!!

*By Rob Davies
AmeriCorps Member
Rowe Clark Math and Science Academy
2008—2009*

Crutches, The Crucible, and Service

This year John missed a lot of school. Like the other millions of people who suffer from sickle cell anemia, a disease that affects the body's red blood cells and often causes long-term pain and tiredness, John's quality of life is severely strained. The school's administrators arranged for John to receive tutoring this summer, so he stays with his class.

Our team is staying busy this summer: chaperoning college visits and leading enrichment classes. In an effort to minimize time spent hobbling around on crutches, I injured my knee recently, my site coordinator thought I could tutor John.

Various teachers dished off assignments and instructions to me. A few didn't expect John to show up — for the first week he didn't.

The other day, stooped over crutches, waiting for my ride, I felt a slight vibration in my pocket. It was a text message from my site coordinator. John was there. She wanted to know if I had anything for him. After a second I replied:

There are bio worksheets and some reading.

The worksheets were a long shot, John has two biology books and his teacher thinks he's lost them. But Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* was there.

After arriving, I introduced myself to John. We set some goals and he started the book, which he knew more about than I did. Google changed that. I lectured John on Miller's recurring themes: injustice, humanity, responsibility — and his marriage to Marilyn Monroe.

Although our mentor-student relationship just started, John's opening up, showing some keen insights and flashes of interest.

No John today. I hope he feels better; for now, that's all I can do. When he's better, I'll be around. I can't save him. But I can support him. Faced with adversity, it's nice to have crutches.

*Matt Cunningham
AmeriCorps Member
Pritzker College Prep 2008—2009*



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PROJECT YES! connects caring adults with youth in and around Chicago's 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.

For more information, please contact:

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