



'Roots EYE View

The newsletter of the MU Extension Youth Enterprisers VISTA Program

Volume 1, Issue 1
January 2009

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Background:

EYE VISTA is a statewide AmeriCorps*VISTA program co-sponsored by MU Extension and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Consistent with the mission of VISTA, EYE VISTA places national service participants in economically disadvantaged areas to build the capacity of communities to eliminate poverty.

For more information, visit our website at: www.mo4h.missouri.edu/go/programs/vista

EYE VISTA is Growing the Crew!



Adam

Columbia, Mo.

At the 4-H Center on the MU Campus, Adam Loftin is working closely with VISTA Project Director Steve Hennes to develop and distribute supplementary materials for youth entrepreneurship, including a series of youth business startup guides for use by 4-H members throughout Missouri. Adam is also writing and publishing web profiles of 4-H alumni across the state who have become successful entrepreneurs.



Antoine

Also at the 4-H Center on the MU Campus, Antoine Jones is utilizing his previous experience as a VISTA and his work with non-profit agencies to spearhead member recruitment and training for EYE VISTA.

Antoine posts positions, screens candidates, and handles inquiries about service. He also provides training and technical support to the other EYE VISTA team members.



Shanna

Fredericktown, Mo.

With the City of Fredericktown, Shanna Sorg is working with downtown merchants to organize events that support local entrepreneurs, such as "Pickin' on the Square" weekly music festivals, and coordinating workshops and field trips for area youth entrepreneurs. Shanna was instrumental in helping the City of Fredericktown apply for and receive the 2008 Capital Community Award for Missouri from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines.



Kate

Kate Cox is also working with the City of Fredericktown as coordinator of a new Main Street downtown revitalization program. She is organizing task forces and conducting community meetings to launch the four-point approach. Along with this, Kate is developing a community volunteer database and other mechanisms to help community groups better connect with local volunteer talent on economic development projects.

Hayti Heights, Mo.

Adrienne Hunter and Jackie Brooks have formed a 4-H entrepreneurship club for area youth, and organized adult basic education and financial literacy programs for local residents. The two VISTAs work out of an asset building center from the local housing authority, and are sponsored by Helping Ministry Neighborhood Development Corporation, with LU and MU Extension, local schools, churches, banks, and community betterment groups as partners.



Adrienne



Jackie

Hillsboro, Mo.

Through the Jefferson County MU Extension Office, Melissa McAlpine is working with an advisory group of local leaders to launch an entrepreneurial coaching program on the fringe of the St. Louis metropolitan area. Melissa has formed a core advisory group, assisted them with conducting surveys and focus groups with area entrepreneurs, and is now poised to support the formation of the first mentoring team. A Shop Jefferson County campaign is also planned as Melissa begins her second year as a VISTA on the project.



Melissa

Marshall, Mo.

Angela McElmurry is serving with the Pahlö Art Center (based out of the community's old hospital building) to expand opportunities for local artists to market their work through the center's gallery and through community festivals. Angela is growing the organization's fundraising capacity, forming volunteer partnerships for art enrichment programs, and helping prepare for the launch of Kazoo's children's interactive art museum on-site at the art center in April 2009.



Angela

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Josh

Marshall, Mo.

At the Marshall-Saline Development Corporation, Josh King is beginning to engage the community in an entrepreneur recruitment campaign targeting high school alumni from the past 50 years. In addition, he is assisting with grant proposal development, helping Missouri Valley College design teacher in-service training, compiling area business resource information, meeting with entrepreneurs, and working on strategies to close gaps between entrepreneurs and business services.



Jessica

Memphis, Mo.

Jessica Miller is working in the rural northeast region of Missouri to identify and train adults and youth in workforce development and entrepreneurship. Through the Scotland County Youth Association, Jessica is establishing a job shadowing program in the community. She's also recruiting volunteers, organizing on-site programs, and identifying feasible funding strategies for the Scotland County Youth Center.

St. Louis, Mo.

At the St. Patrick Center in downtown St. Louis, Lindsey Jones is finishing up as coordinator of the City Seeds Project, an urban garden which allows homeless and impoverished clients to learn skills in horticulture and marketing and sales of fruits and vegetables at local markets. This past year, Lindsey has successfully supported expansion of the program, resulting in record participation and produce raised and sold. She facilitated partnerships with landscaping companies and other potential employers of graduates, and laid groundwork for participants to produce and sell a value-added item next year. In February, Lindsey will move to part-time employment with City Seeds (with funding she helped to secure for the program), while a second-year VISTA joins the program.



Lindsey

Elliot Smith is also based at the St. Patrick Center in St. Louis, bringing forth entrepreneurial opportunities through a multi-million dollar federal grant to establish Project BEGIN, the nation's first small business incubator targeting home-



Elliot

less and impoverished populations. Elliot is assisting the incubator management team with startup tasks such as marketing and recruitment and planning for project sustainability, and has successfully landed the incubator's first tenant. An initiative between Sherwin Williams and St. Louis Housing Authority is also in the works. Project BEGIN held its grand opening for the public last October.

Ava, Mo.

Caryl Posada-Stillings is the newest VISTA to join the program. Working with MU Extension Douglas County Office, Caryl is assisting the Douglas County Economic Development Committee in identifying sources of funding for leadership and economic development programs. She will also be working with the committee on strategic planning and newsletter communication. Caryl's role also involves organizing an entrepreneurship educational series, and providing support for youth entrepreneurs and school-based programs in the area.

Stay tuned!

Four more VISTA members are scheduled to begin service on projects in February!

AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study: Impact of Service After Eight-Years

The Corporation for National Service conducted a longitudinal study to determine impacts of service on members eight years later, in terms of career choices and community involvement.

The results were illuminating, in terms of how programs like EYE VISTA are providing members with one-year (and sometimes longer) professional development experiences that may likely lead into social entrepreneurship or careers in public service, including Extension or other closely affiliated entities. Results also show AmeriCorps is significant for providing people from disadvantaged circumstances with onramps to public service.

Here are some of the highlights from the executive summary of the report:

AmeriCorps is a pipeline to careers in public service.

- 60 percent of alumni work with a non-profit organization or the government.
- 46 percent of State and National members are employed in a public service-related job, such as education, social work, and public safety, compared to 33 percent of their comparison group.

AmeriCorps generates civic leaders who remain actively engaged in their communities.

- AmeriCorps alumni feel more empowered to work for the betterment of their community, and even feel they can work

with local governments and others to make positive changes in communities.

- 59 percent of members believe they would definitely be able to collaborate with others in their community to start an after-school program, compared to 52 percent in the comparison groups.
- Members are slightly more likely than their comparison group to be active in community activities such as public meetings (69% versus 63%).

AmeriCorps exposes members to new career opportunities.

- About 80 percent of members reported that their service exposed them to new career options (83% of NCCC members and 79% of State and National members).
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AmeriCorps Longitudinal Study cont'd

AmeriCorps has an even greater impact on the career choices of minority members and those individuals from disadvantaged circumstances.

- Minority members are significantly more likely to choose a career in public service than members of the comparison group (44% compared to 26%). AmeriCorps members from disadvantaged circumstances are 20 percentage points more likely to be employed in a public service field (46% compared to 26%).

IMPLICATIONS

- AmeriCorps presents opportunities for young adults to get on the pathway to a lifetime of service.
- AmeriCorps offers alumni an opportunity to reinvest their time, talent, and leadership into their communities through their work and/or other community activities.
- Members develop the kind of leadership and other skills that the public sector needs in order to overcome workforce shortages in fields such as teaching and nursing.
- For those interested in public service careers, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, AmeriCorps can open doors to public service job options.

AMERICORPS

AmeriCorps provides opportunities for 75,000 Americans each year to give intensive service to their communities and country through three programs: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). AmeriCorps members recruit, train, and supervise community volunteers, tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, help communities respond to disasters, and build the capacity of nonprofit groups to be self sustaining, among many other activities. Since 1994 more than 540,000 Americans have served in AmeriCorps.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Corporation for National and Community Service improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year the Corporation engages more than four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet local needs through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs.

“AmeriCorps is a pipeline to careers in public service”

Source: Still Serving: Measuring the Eight Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni. May 2008. Corporation for National and Community Service. Washington, DC.

What's Ahead: EYE VISTA in 2009

Early in 2009, EYE VISTA received approval on our year three renewal grant application. Like last year, the grant provides up to 20 VISTA positions to award to Missouri communities between now and Jan. 2010. This is good news for many of our current sponsoring organizations who intend to renew projects for another year!

EYE VISTA positions will continue to support projects that meet one or more of the program strategies: 1) supporting entrepreneurship; 2) developing community leadership; 3) engaging youth/young adults; 4) capturing & reinvesting community wealth. Currently, we are about to award our 20th VISTA position to a new project sponsor. This means the program will be operating at full capacity for the first time in two and half years!

The 2009 allotment of VISTA positions will be first available first to existing sponsors that demonstrate progress toward project goals and are seeking to renew for another year.

For positions that become available to new sponsors, any non-profit or governmental entity may apply to sponsor a VISTA. Check the EYE VISTA website for updates and materials at: www.mo4h.missouri.edu/go/programs/vista

Or contact us:

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