



# Getting Things Done

A PUBLICATION OF THE DC AMERICORPS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL.

## AmeriCorps Alums: 550,000 strong and still serving

By Whitney Soenksen, Member Services and Outreach Coordinator, AmeriCorps Alums

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### Did you know?

AmeriCorps Members have served a total of 705 million hours, which is equal to approximately 80,000 years and it was 80,000 years ago that Homo sapiens first migrated out of Africa.

-Zach Phillips  
VISTA at National AIDS Fund

### Tell your story!

Do you you have a story, a rant, an event or something you'd like to share in the ALC newsletter?

Email: Sarah Jessee at [jesseesb@gmail.com](mailto:jesseesb@gmail.com)

Any AmeriCorps member or alum may contribute!

For the past couple of months, AmeriCorps Alums has experienced a flurry of activity, culminating in the amazing experience of walking in the Presidential Inaugural Parade on Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> (AmeriCorps Alums was the only domestic service organization to take part).

The strength and spirit of alumni across the country is as strong, if not stronger, than ever. We've heard our new president's call to invigorate and expand national service and we join in with raised voices hoping that someday our numbers are far more than we could ever imagine. As all alumni of national service know, it's not simply what you do, but who you do it with.

"The greatest take aways from my experience {serving through AmeriCorps at Volunteer Maryland} were the knowledge that a band of community members can really "get things done" and that folks who are involved with AmeriCorps are some of the most special, talented people in the world... friends for life and partners in service," Emily Gilliland, Executive Director, Oregon Campus Compact.

AmeriCorps Alums represents these 550,000 alumni of AmeriCorps National Service, who together constitute a powerful force for change in this country. AmeriCorps Alums helps alumni continue to "get things done" by connecting alums, advancing the

commitment to service, supporting and advocating for AmeriCorps programs and building the capacity of alumni to be agents of change in their communities.

The future is bright for AmeriCorps Alums. We have expanded our staff, adding a Member Services and Outreach Coordinator, launched numerous social media and policy initiatives and are working hard to better serve individual alums, local chapters and spread the word about service.

Currently we are offering free tax returns through the Beehive and have forged a partnership with Bank of America that can earn Alums of AmeriCorps more than \$250/year in discounts.

We are civic leaders making change happen. We are AmeriCorps Alums.

To get more information about any of AmeriCorps Alum programs, please visit:  
[www.americorpsalums.org](http://www.americorpsalums.org)  
or read our blog at [americorpsalums.wordpress.com](http://americorpsalums.wordpress.com).

A publication of:



AmeriCorps Leadership Council

Supporting AmeriCorps Members & Alums in Greater Washington, DC



# AmeriCorps Alums march on Inauguration Day

By Ben Marcus, AmeriCorps Alum

**A**meriCorps Alums, the official association for the 550,000+ alumni of national service, was invited to march in the inaugural parade for the first time. 150 alumni representing dozens of different programs marched, chanting 'Fired up! Ready to serve!' and 'We got H.O.P.E.!'

The Obama's seemed quite pleased with the presence of national service members in the parade and visibly perked up as the contingent approached the Presidential viewing stand. Planned by a team of alumni, the AmeriCorps Alums group carried flags representing all states and territories under US control in addition to signs and banners with hopeful slogans.

In addition to participating in the march, AmeriCorps Alums was invited to help lead teams of volunteers at RFK Stadium on MLK Day where they put together care packages for members of the military serving overseas.

National service programs have played a key role in solving our community issues since their inception in 1965 to answer JFK's call to service;



Photos by Ben Marcus

and, have since been bolstered with the creation of the Corporation for National and Community Service. From tutoring and mentoring students to renovating and beautifying parks and trails, recreation centers and schools, AmeriCorps members get things done for America.

President Obama has made expanding national service programs a priority for his administration and multiple pieces of legislation are currently being considered by Congress to do just that. While AmeriCorps funding has declined over the past eight years, the role of national service has increased in the everyday lives of Americans all over the country.

time. Ten volunteers from Georgetown University attended and ran the activity stations. Because so many students signed up to volunteer, Jumpstart at Georgetown was also able to invite children and families from the preschool who are not in the Jumpstart program. Whole Foods generously donated snacks for everyone to enjoy at the party. All of the children received books to take home with them after the Winter Party.

## City Year partners with MTV and others to answer President Obama's call to serve on Inauguration Day

By Sarah Jessee, City Year

On January 20, 2009, MTV film crews roamed the halls of Simon Elementary, providing live coverage for "MTV Presents Be the Change: Live from the Inaugural." Inspired by the day's Inaugural events, AmeriCorps members embodied what it means to be agents of change.

City Year teamed up with MTV, Service Nation, Target, Greater DC Cares, Heart of America Foundation and corps members from various AmeriCorps programs to complete a library renovation and paint murals at Simon Elementary School in southeast Washington, DC. Corps members and volunteers shelved books, arranged tables, and painted murals to finish off this month-long project.

"It was a unique opportunity to partner with well known sponsors in the spirit of change and especially on Inauguration Day!" remarked Erin Connell, a City Year corps member. "It was exciting, I had a great time," Connell said.

Service began around 10 p.m. on the night of Inauguration and MTV filmed live at Simon Elementary as well as from the Hilton where the Youth Inaugural Ball was held. Film crews also broadcast footage from service sites in New Orleans and Kenya.

"It was an amazing experience that I will probably never forget," said Schai Schairer, a second year City Year corps member. "I felt like I was answering President Obama's call to service and it was cool to share it with the world on MTV," Schairer concluded.

This event engaged 60 city year corps and staff members and several AmeriCorps members from a variety of programs in DC.

## Holiday Service with Jumpstart in DC

By Kristen Dusch, VISTA at Jumpstart

On Thursday, December 4, 2008, Jumpstart at Georgetown University hosted a Winter Party for children and families at the Rosemount Center. Families and children participated in fun activities including snow paintings, sand paintings, magic drawings, holiday card decorating, and story

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# A Legacy of Service:

One second-term AmeriCorps volunteer tells her story

By Aisha Carlisle  
Site Coordinator, Sports4Kids

As I reflect back on why I chose to participate in AmeriCorps for a second term, I kept coming back to memories of my grandmother, Mrs. Louise V. Whitlock-Reed. Service was something that I saw practiced in my grandmother's interactions with others, it wasn't just platitudes. I am a very strong believer in community service because of her. I wished I'd had a conversation with my grandmother about why she committing to helping others throughout her life. I'd actually like to ask her a lot of other questions too.

A lot of times adults tell children to have certain values and beliefs, but often times the adults whether they be parents, teachers or coaches don't practice the words they preach. You know of the old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do."

I remember going to my grandmother's house and seeing a big black and white button with a picture of President John F. Kennedy in her bedroom. It was placed so that I saw it every time I entered her room. I didn't know why she kept it there. I regret that I didn't ask her why it was so important.

I always think of that button when I hear one of his most famous quotes, "Ask not what your country

can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

I once heard my grandmother talking about working in politics as a precinct committeewoman in Indianapolis in the 1960s. I listened to stories of life for Blacks in America from all the elders in my community. These were priceless lessons that I cherish.

I wonder who it was that inspired her. Was it someone in her childhood? Was it President Kennedy? I was so surprised to learn she was involved in politics. At that time, I didn't understand the connection of politics and community service. They seemed very separate and distinct. My grandmother's service to the community extended well beyond getting people to the polls. She had foster children for several years and took in family and friends in when they were down on their luck.

What is service? My definition of service is to aid or assist others. As I look back on my life, I've always sought after jobs and opportunities that were in service to others. It's always been important to me to be in a position that allows me to interact with others especially as a coach and motivational speaker. Like many others, service for me was volunteering, registering people to vote, coaching, and teaching.

I used to think that only a prestigious job title was the key to making a difference. After graduating from undergrad and grad school and nearly four years on Capitol Hill, I had forgotten something so very important that my grandmother taught me. Making a difference in people's lives is personal, it's about relationships. It's not about your political party, race, socioeconomic status, religion, gender, or any other categories that divide us. I

had to ask myself, are you rising above these arbitrary divisions and helping others because it needs to be done?

About two years ago one of my students was upset because she bought a sandwich for a homeless man. As she walked away she saw him throwing away the meat and toppings he didn't enjoy. She told me that, he was wasteful and ungrateful for

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Photo from Brent Elementary by Carolyn Benard, AmeriCorps Alum

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throwing most of it away. "Why, didn't he just eat it?" she asked me. Well, I asked her, did you ask him what he wanted or did you give him what you thought he might like. She said, "I wasted my money." I said, "You have to do the right thing without expecting anything in return. This reminds me of a quote from Eric Butterworth, "Virtue is its own reward. If we feel the need of reward for virtue, then it's not sincere."

Community service work isn't easy; it doesn't come with instant gratification, it requires long term commitment. It often goes without thanks, little to no pay, it's exhausting, and begins early in the morning and ends as the sun goes down. My job is rewarding because I know that I am planting seeds through my smiles, high expectations, hugs, hi-fives, and good deeds and just maybe one

day my work will inspire someone to give back.

My hope for success for my students and the community I serve in extends beyond my current service term with AmeriCorps. I remind my students that while I am in a teaching position at their school, I can't be successful if I am not learning too. I love learning just as much as I love teaching.

My grandmother was successful because she planted seeds in all the lives she encountered. Every day I plant seeds of love, knowledge, hard work, and service in all my students. All of her sacrifice, service, and strength allowed me to reap the benefits of many amazing opportunities today. Service for me is very personal. I am honored and proud that I

have and will continue to serve others. I have a lot more planting to do. Don't you?



**Next  
AmeriCorps  
Leadership  
Council  
Meeting**

**March 4, 2009  
at 6 p.m.  
441 4th Street  
NW  
Suite 1117  
See you there!**

**All-Corps Bowling  
Social**

April 16

**Global Youth  
Service Days**

April 24 to 26

**AmeriCorps  
Week**

May 9 to 16

**Life After  
AmeriCorps  
Conference**

May 13

**DC Conference  
on Service and  
Leadership**

May 14

**All-Corps  
Service Day**

May 16

## DC Chapter of AmeriCorps Alums and DC InterCorps Council have merged

In an effort to better make AmeriCorps alumni more involved in the lives of current AmeriCorps members and to better support current AmeriCorps members, the DC InterCorps Council and the DC AmeriCorps Alums Chapter have merged to create the DC AmeriCorps Leadership Council. AmeriCorps alumni will serve on this new council

alongside current AmeriCorps members to plan events for all AmeriCorps members, past and present. We hope that this new council will be able to utilize the talents and networks of alumni to provide AmeriCorps members with opportunities for personal and professional development, such as workshops on grant writing and non-profit management.

To become involved in the Council or to offer suggestions for areas of focus for the Council, please contact :

**Jason Hanser,  
AmeriCorps\*VISTA, at  
jason.hanser@dc.gov or  
202-274-2229.**

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