



Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties

# 'BUILDING BRIDGES' AMERICORPS\*VISTA PROGRAM

Volume 3, Issue 1 November 2008

A Program of Community Services Consortium

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**Host Site  
Applications  
Available January  
2009!!**

### Mission of AmeriCorps\*VISTA

*To start, strengthen, or expand  
programs, systems or services that  
help people move out of poverty.*

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## EACH ENDING STARTS A NEW BEGINNING

July marked the end of the second year of the 'Building Bridges' program. Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties said goodbye to eleven VISTA members who spent the previous year helping their organizations build capacity to alleviate poverty in the community.

"It was a very successful year for all of the communities we served. Each year gets stronger and stronger," said Tom Cope, program supervisor. Since the program was implemented in July 2006, VISTA members have generated more than \$1 million in resources for our service area and recruited over 400 community volunteers who have served 5500 hours. In addition, VISTA members created mentoring programs, developed literacy programs, designed health and nutrition curriculum and conducted research about ending homelessness.

### What are the 2007-2008 VISTA members doing now:

**Carmen Westfall** is working at the Albany Police Department.

**Chelsea Harlos** is working as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor in Portland.

**Chelsea Parsons** is finishing school in

Wyoming to be an art therapist.

**Danee' Cliver** is finishing school at OSU.

**Erica Johnson** is completing a dietetics internship in New Hampshire.

**Jamie Ernst** is working in a recycling center in Wisconsin.

**Jeff Mascornick** is completing graduate school in Non-Profit Management.

**Mona Gaither** is completing graduate school in Early Childhood Education.

**Rachel Hellesto** is teaching middle school science in Oakland, CA through a teaching fellowship.

**Sam Morley** is completing another year of service through AmeriCorps building houses in Louisiana.

**Sanjai Tripathi** is continuing to volunteer at his project.



L to R: Danee' Cliver, Sanjai Tripathi, Jamie Ernst, Carmen Westfall, Mona Gaither, Erica Johnson, and Sam Morley.

## GETTING THINGS DONE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES!

Here is what the VISTA members have been doing in the community!

# of Volunteers Recruited: **437 community volunteers**

# of Service Hours Performed by Volunteers Recruited: **5518 hours**

Total \$ Amount of Financial Resources Generated: **\$1,131,003 in cash & non-cash resources**

Data from July 14, 2006 to June 30, 2008

*'Building Bridges'***VISTA Members**

2008-2009

**Linn County****Alix Stinnett**Albany Partnership for Housing  
and Community Development**Pamela Patterson-Lundsford**Cascade West Council of  
Governments**Rebekah Hickey**

Boys &amp; Girls Club of Lebanon

**Benton County****Amy Everhart**

Boys &amp; Girls Club of Corvallis

**Amy-Rose Simpson**

Community Services Consortium

**Angela Dahlke**

Community Outreach, Inc.

**Lisa Nolan**

Boys &amp; Girls Club of Corvallis

**Mario Flores**Corvallis Public Schools  
Foundation**Lincoln County****Shawn Cardwell**

Head Start of Lincoln County

**Advisory Council Members**

2008-2009

**Chuck Crowe****Dan Sundseth****Dean-Stephen Kauffman****Mike Gibson****Danee' Cliver****IN MY OWN WORDS...***Submitted by Amy Doherty-  
AmeriCorps\*VISTA with CSC*

In a world where we often hear about US Senators being convicted of Federal crimes, the Enron scandal, the sub-prime mortgage fiasco and other examples of greed overwhelming ethics, it is a logical question about why I did AmeriCorps. Living a life of poverty alongside people in ones community who are in the greatest need seems to be an illogical step for anyone to make.

I tried to explain the same seemingly irrational decision to my friends. We had all just finished the last few grueling months of college and most of them were going on to lucrative jobs and could not understand why I would choose to work towards anything that would not further my career.

I have my reasons for choosing VISTA, and those reasons are actually pretty selfish. I wanted to believe that people will

embrace hardships to accomplish something meaningful. I have found that spending a year with other VISTA members, volunteers and non-profit employees has greatly reinforced that belief.

I believe that everyone should perform some kind of service. Volunteer service is what our country was founded upon, why our taxes are some of the lowest of any industrialized nation and what keeps our country running. How long could our non-profit organizations stay in service without volunteers?

Why did I choose VISTA? I still try to explain to my friends. I tell them that life is more than a paycheck and being a VISTA is far more beneficial than a big paycheck. I guess if you have to ask, you won't understand the answer.

*Submitted by Amy-Rose Simpson-  
AmeriCorps\*VISTA with the 10 Year Plan to  
End Homelessness for Linn and Benton*

Why do we breathe; why do we eat, or sleep? Something inside of each of us informs us that this is a natural course that we should adhere to; and we respect that. Shortly after college without much consideration I joined AmeriCorps, for the same reason. The choice of national service, to me, was a natural life course.

For those drawn to service it makes sense and goes without explanation. However, for those who struggle to understand why someone would "give up" a year of their life to volunteer at the poverty level I will try to explain the logic behind my decision.

I feel I have been extremely privileged in life. The word privileged has taken on a

whole new meaning in my life in recent years. Growing up in a working class family that always teetered on the poverty line I saw the consumer driven ideation of what it meant to be privileged. Looking back now, I realize how lucky I have always been to have it all: a loving family, an education, food, water, and freedom.

I have been provided with a great deal in my life. I feel it is only right that I take the opportunity now, when I am able, to give back to the community and country that has given me that opportunity. In return I haven't given up a year of my life, I have gained precious new friends and irreplaceable learning experiences that I am certain will last a life time.

## FROM THE FIELD: Stories from Our Communities

### Make a Difference Day

Written by: Tifani Erpelding, Program Coordinator and Amy Doherty, VISTA Member

VISTA members who have already dedicated themselves to a year of service, “dug” in at the Youth Garden Project at Bruce Starker Arts Park on Thursday, October 23, 2008 for Make a Difference Day. The main priority of the service project was to put the garden to bed for the winter. The day consisted of removing a field of corn, pulling up tomatoes, harvesting seeds and fighting



VISTA Mario Flores wrestling with a determined fence post.

with some determined fence posts. Amy Simpson stated, “It was great to get out of the office and out in the sun. I really enjoyed spending time with my fellow VISTAs out in the community. I look forward

to our other days of service.”

Make a Difference Day is just one of the direct service days VISTA members are allowed to participate in. Our program also coordinates activities for MLK Day, Earth Day, National Volunteer Week and Global Youth Service Day. Thank you to Amy Doherty for organizing



VISTA Angie Dahlke harvesting seeds.



A group of VISTAs removing corn.

the activity and Leslie Van Allen, the Youth Garden Project Director.

### CSC Welcomes New VISTA Members

On August 18, 2008, CSC welcomed 6 more VISTA members to Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties. The new team of VISTAs will work on a variety of projects, mostly continuations from the previous year, but some new projects. The members will serve one year at full time in their respective agencies. Three more members joined the team in mid-December 2008.

#### Introducing the new VISTA Team:

**Alix Stinnett** moved to Oregon from Washington and is serving with Albany Partnership for Housing and Community Development to enhance their resident services program and continue their strategic plan.

**Amy Everhart** traveled from Wisconsin to work with the Boys & Girls Club of Corvallis on resource development initiatives.

**Amy-Rose Simpson** came to Corvallis from Florida and is continuing the work of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness for Linn and Benton Counties.

**Angela Dahlke** moved here from Alabama and is serving with Community Outreach, Inc. building their

volunteer program and data collection systems.

**Lisa Nolan** was already working with the Boys and Girls Club of Corvallis when she found out about the Volunteer Coordinator position. She will work to make the program sustainable throughout the next year.

**Mario Flores** was also already living in Corvallis and decided to spend a year with the Corvallis School District Foundation coordinating the Ready for Kindergarten! Program.

**Pamela Patterson-Lundsford** only has to travel from Corvallis to Albany where she is assisting the Oregon Cascade West Council of Governments with the Senior Meals Program.

**Shawn Cardwell** also came to Oregon from Washington. She is working on the coast to help Head Start of Lincoln County.

**Rebekah Hickey** traveled from North Carolina to assist the Boys and Girls Club of Lebanon with resource development.

**Welcome VISTA Members!**