



*'BUILDING BRIDGES'*  
**AMERICORPS\*VISTA PROGRAM**

Volume 2, Issue 2    March 2008

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**Mission of  
AmeriCorps\*VISTA**

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

**'Building Bridges'  
Staff:**

Tifani Erpelding  
Program Coordinator  
(541) 758-2641  
terpelding@csc.gen.or.us

Tom Cope  
Program Supervisor  
(541) 758-2646  
tcope@csc.gen.or.us

Community Services Consortium  
545 SW 2nd Street, Suite A  
Corvallis, OR 97333



**CONGRATULATIONS TO THE  
2008-2009 HOST SITES**

We are pleased to announce the host sites selected for our 2008-2009 Program Year. Thank you to everyone who helped facilitate the selection process. Members for the new program year will start in mid August.

**Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties**

Consumer Credit Counseling Services  
Oregon Cascade West Council of Governments (2 projects)

**Linn and Benton Counties**

Community Services Consortium—  
Homeless and Housing Issues

**Linn County Only**

Boys and Girls Club of Albany  
Boys and Girls Club of Lebanon

Albany Partnership for Housing and  
Community Development

**Benton County Only**

Community Services Consortium—  
Youth Programs

Southside Youth Outreach, Inc.  
Boys and Girls Club of Corvallis

Community Outreach, Inc.

Corvallis Public Schools

Corvallis Public Schools Foundation

**Lincoln County**

CSC Head Start (2 projects)

Lincoln County Commission on  
Children and Families

**VISTA SELECTED FOR LEADER CORPS**

Congratulations to Erica Johnson at Oregon Cascade West Council of Governments for being selected for Northwest Leader Corps! Selection for Leader Corps is competitive and is one of the only advanced training opportunities for VISTA members. Participants spend four days in both November and February focusing on interpersonal development as well as professional skill building.



Erica Johnson

**GETTING THINGS DONE FOR OUR  
COMMUNITIES!**

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

*# of Volunteers Recruited: 345 community volunteers*

*# of Service Hours Performed by Volunteers Recruited: 2905.05 hours*

*Total \$ Amount of Financial Resources Generated: \$630,472 in cash & non-cash resources*

Data from July 14, 2006 to December 31, 2007

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

2007-2008

**Linn County****Danee' Cliver**

Greater Albany Public Schools

**Erica Johnson**Cascade West Council of  
Governments-Senior Meals  
Program**Benton County****Carmen Westfall**Corvallis Public Schools  
Foundation**Chelsea Harlos**

Boys &amp; Girls Club of Corvallis

**Chelsea Parsons**

Home Life, Inc.

**Jamie Ernst**

Community Services Consortium

**Jeff Mascornick**

Community Outreach, Inc.

**Sam Morley**

Corvallis Public Schools

**Sanjai Tripathi**Cascade West Council of  
Governments-Emergency  
Management**Lincoln County****Mona Gaither**

CSC Head Start-Literacy

**Rachel Hellesto**CSC Head Start-Health &  
Nutrition**Advisory Council Members**

2007-2008

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

I first learned about my current AmeriCorps\*VISTA position from a long time friend. I was walking my dog and ran into Cheryl on the street. She asked if I knew anyone who might be interested in working with homeless students and the homeless liaison in the Albany School District. I was at a place in life where I needed to decide the next step...either continue on with my education or get a job. Since I wasn't exactly sure which education direction to go, social service or teaching, and I knew that getting a job would make it even harder to go back to school, a year as a VISTA was the perfect solution.

Cheryl got me a flyer explaining the process, I checked out the AmeriCorps website, and then applied for the position.

It was a good decision. I have been working at the FACT program in the Albany schools for six months and have learned so much more than I would have otherwise. Being a VISTA has afforded me the opportunity to work on a social service project within a school setting. It has given me the break from school that I needed to help me decide the next step. I've also met new and inspiring people who are making a difference in our communities.

I would encourage anyone who might be at a similar crossroad in life to volunteer with AmeriCorps. It's a great program that has offered me wonderful opportunities.

***Submitted by Jamie Ernst-  
AmeriCorps\*VISTA with CSC***

When asked why I decided to donate a year of my life to doing an AmeriCorps\*VISTA project, more than one motive came to mind. A strong desire to gain experience for future careers in combination with an interest in developing a broader understanding of the non-profit world proved to be my main motivations. My belief that I would receive satisfaction from doing something to help people out of poverty also played a strong role in my decision to apply. In an attempt to fill these desires and prove these beliefs, I accepted a position as the Housing and Homeless Initiatives Planning Assistant with the Community Services Consortium.

After I made the decision that I needed to switch gears and give another career path a try, I decided to look into AmeriCorps. I had done a different AmeriCorps program in the past, and had a very positive experience. Knowing that being

involved with AmeriCorps is a great way to learn skills and gain an understanding of various aspects of service work, I decided to apply.

The non-profit sector has always been of interest to me, and another reason I chose to do a VISTA project was to gain experience in indirect service work. I was not sure if I really wanted to take up a career in the non-profit world, and I figured volunteering with the VISTA program for a year might help me make that decision.

Finally, helping people is something that has always given me satisfaction, and AmeriCorps is an avenue which allows people to do just that every day. Issues surrounding homelessness and poverty interest me, and hopefully after my year with AmeriCorps, I will be able to leave a lasting effect on a community in need.

## FROM THE FIELD: Stories from Our Communities



### Great Pumpkin Run

Submitted by : Chelsea Parsons—AmeriCorps\*VISTA Member at Home Life, Inc.

\$4,000! That is the grand total that Home Life raised through donations, sponsorships, and registration fees from The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Pumpkin Run. The Great Pumpkin Run is a 5K Walk/Run and a 10K Run the Kiwanis Club of Corvallis graciously passed off to our nonprofit organization, Home Life, as a functioning and successful fundraiser. This year, our first as the race directors, we surpassed all expectations!

As Home Life's new Volunteer Coordinator, I was nervous to begin recruitment for what has become one of our most significant fundraisers. We needed volunteers to help direct runners, caution traffic, pass out water and fruit slices, register runners, and keep the finish line organized; this, to me, seemed daunting and near impossible. This was my first big project with Home Life and I felt the need to not only accomplish what was asked of me, but to excel at it. With some guidance and the help of fellow volunteers, I gathered almost 25 people to accomplish those tasks and more!

At Home Life, we believe that individuals with developmental disabilities should enjoy active, productive, and independent lives. The money from the Great Pumpkin Run goes directly to support that mission. Much is used for client recreation and to make sure that they have the best assistance that we can provide. I'm very proud to be working with an organization that is so dedicated to serving people with developmental disabilities and so willing to help me succeed in my year of service.

### MLK Day Activities

Submitted by : Tifani Erpelding—*'Building Bridges'* AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program Coordinator

Each year on the third Monday of January when most of the country is off work, VISTA members are required to complete an additional day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Like last year, the members of the *'Building Bridges'* AmeriCorps\*VISTA program partnered with RSVP on a project. When our previous project doing a food collection for seniors wasn't going to be an option, the planning committee decided to organize a training for seniors regarding computer fraud and technology safety. This idea soon blossomed into an full day event at the River Center in Lebanon, with speakers from Department of Justice and Linn County Sherriff's Department. Sixty or more seniors attended the lecture, lunch and hands on training. A special thanks goes out to the planning committee: Denise Magee—RSVP, Amy Doherty—RSVP, Danee' Cliver—VISTA, Carmen Westfall—VISTA, Ray Kopczynski—CSC and Lynn Cohen—The River Center.



Chelsea and Danee' at lunch.



Vista members completing a reflection activity.

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## TRAINING NEWS

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**Pre-Service Orientation and Training** — Prior to starting their year of service all VISTA members are required to attend Pre-Service Orientation and Training. This year members made the 4 day journey to Provo, UT where they engaged in training regarding the policies of VISTA and general discussions on poverty.

**Grantwriting Training**— Tom Cope provided the VISTA members with a day of training regarding grantwriting on September 13. This is a core training that we provide to our group each year. We are fortunate to have Tom as a resource and he always provides the group with an excellent training on grant writing basics.

**Communication Skills Training**— Our program was fortunate to receive additional funding to coordinate communication skills training for supervisors and members in early October. We contracted with Linn Benton Mediation Services to conduct training on conflict styles.

**In Service Training (IST)**— VISTA members attended In Service Training (IST) provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service at the end of October. This was a three day event located in Portland. IST offers VISTA members additional pro-

fessional and personal development.

**Volunteer Management Training, Part I**— Throughout the year *Building Bridges* hosts special trainings focused on topics requested by VISTA members and supervisors. On October 15, *Building Bridges* members received the first half of a two part session on volunteer management from Glenis Chapin. Glenis comes with 20 years of experience in volunteer management and currently manages the volunteer program for Marion County. She also works closely with the Mid-Valley Volunteer Managers Association. The second half of the session is scheduled for November 15.

**Volunteer Management, Part II**— The VISTA members concluded their volunteer management training with Glenis on November 15. The second half of the training focused on supervision and training for volunteers.

### Upcoming Training:

March 11, 2008: "Life After AmeriCorps"

The members will receive training in resume and cover letter writing and career development. We partnered with CSC's Direct Client Services Dept. and Maighie Fitzgerald from the Clara Barton VISTA Corps to conduct the training.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Save the Date! Woodstock's Spring for Kids Run is scheduled for April 5<sup>th</sup>! 2008 marks the fifth anniversary of this fun and important community event which provides small grant funds for Corvallis educators through Corvallis Public Schools Foundation. This year look for the addition of a health and wellness fair coordinated by Mike Waters of Timberhill Athletic Club. Come celebrate 5 years of educational enhancement! For more information, call 757-5857.

The Community Services Consortium and AmeriCorps\*VISTA member Jamie Ernst have begun to make arrangements for the development of Linn and Benton County's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The steering committees for each of the counties, made up of representatives from a wide range of community organizations, are in the final stages of being formed, and will continue to meet monthly for the purpose of drafting the plan. The final plan will have three chapters, one for Linn County, one for Benton County, and also a regional chapter. When the steering committees narrow down the focus areas of the plan, they will be soliciting stakeholder input on potential solutions as well as possibly forming subcommittees dedicated to the specific tasks involved. If your agency can be an asset to the development of this plan, please contact Jamie Ernst at [jernst@csc@gen.or.us](mailto:jernst@csc@gen.or.us) or 758-2780, or Joann Zimmer at [jzimmer@csc.gen.or.us](mailto:jzimmer@csc.gen.or.us) or 758-2647. Information about the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness can be found at: [http://www.csc.gen.or.us/10-year\\_plan.htm](http://www.csc.gen.or.us/10-year_plan.htm). A community forum to introduce Linn County's plan is tentatively set for April 16<sup>th</sup>, time and location to be determined.