



Linn, Benton, and Lincoln Counties

# 'BUILDING BRIDGES' AMERICORPS\*VISTA PROGRAM

Volume 4, Issue 1 October 2009

A Program of Community Services Consortium

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Make New Friends</i>	1
<i>Training News</i>	2
<i>In My Own Words...</i>	2
<i>From the Field</i>	3

### 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



## *MAKE NEW FRIENDS, BUT KEEP THE OLD* *A REFLECTION BY TIFANI ERPELDING*

The smell of freshly made pancakes filled the air at the Corl House in Corvallis for the end of the year celebration for the third *Building Bridges*' AmeriCorps\*VISTA team. The day was full of tears (only mine), hugs, smiles, and laughter as the team said good bye to each other. Each year I thought it would get easier for the groups to transition, but this year I had a particularly hard time. Maybe it was the funny moments we shared digging in the gardens for service days or the honest conversations that were passed over coffee that connected me to this team so closely. The members commemorated their year with a compilation CD of songs representing their year of service. It was awesome to hear



VISTAs and Supervisors on the first day of service.

the songs that each of them chose. The insights gained from their selections was significant. Another resource to put in my tool belt. In their last venture of creativity as a team, the group collaged postcards with sequins and cutouts to share words of wisdom with the new VISTA members. I hope to inspire them throughout their year of service or at least make them laugh. I

welcomed the new VISTA team to the *Building Bridges*' family up in Bellevue, WA at their pre-service training. Nerves were racing through my body. What would the team be like? They are AWESOME! On the way home fear swept over me: it is going to be even harder to say good bye to this team! I only have so many tears. Supervisors joined the VISTA members on the first day of service for team building and orientation. The stars aligned and brought together a remarkable group of VISTA members, supervisors and projects. I have a feeling this is going to be a tremendous year for the *Building Bridges*' AmeriCorps\*VISTA Program!



A few members pose for a final picture.



The new 2009-2010 VISTA team!

## GETTING THINGS DONE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES!

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

*# of Volunteers Recruited: 870 community volunteers*

*# of Service Hours Performed by Volunteers Recruited: 16,298 hours*

*Total \$ Amount of Financial Resources Generated: \$1,447,072 in cash & non-cash resources*

Data from July 14, 2006 to September 30, 2009

**'Building Bridges'  
VISTA Members  
2009-2010**

**Linn County**

**Miao Zhao**

Albany InReach Services

**Megan Tolley**

Albany Partnership for Housing and  
Community Development

**Hilary McAlister**

CSC-Santiam Wilderness Academy

**Pamela Patterson-Lunsford**

Cascade West Council of  
Governments

**Melissa Clark**

Linn County Sheriff's Department

**Benton County**

**Amy Everhart**

Boys & Girls Club of Corvallis

**Rachel Karasick**

CSC-Youth Garden Project

**April Pritchard**

CDDC-Project Action

**Megan Czerny**

Parent Enhancement Program

**Dylan Mart**

Strengthening Rural Families

**Lincoln County**

**Shawn Cardwell**

Head Start of Lincoln County

**Kaija Daniel**

Lincoln Commission on Children &  
Families

**Linn & Benton Counties**

**Jenn Crist**

Jackson Street Youth Shelter

**Matt Walker**

Linn Benton Housing Authority

**Advisory Council Members**

**Dan Sundseth**

**Dean-Stephen Kauffman**

**Mike Gibson**

**Danee' Cliver**

**Gerry Perrone**

# TRAINING NEWS

Since the new VISTA team started in August, they have been busy with projects and training. In September they all received training in grant writing and community building from Tom Cope with CSC. "We like to provide our VISTA members with access to a variety of training that will help them with capacity building at their sites. Grant writing is just one of the areas we focus on," stated Tifani Erpelding, Program Coordinator.



**Grant Writing  
with  
Tom Cope**



**Civic Engage-  
ment Conference  
in Salem, OR**



The VISTA member's also attended the Oregon Civic Engagement Conference and VISTA In Service Training in Salem, OR October 1-3, 2009. Workshop sessions focused on community building, diversity, strategic planning, volunteer management, and much more. The VISTA members also received special training in leadership development and conflict resolution.

**VISTA Members  
at In Service  
Training**



# IN MY OWN WORDS...

*Submitted by: Megan Tolley-  
Albany Partnership for Housing and  
Community Development*

As I began my undergraduate program at OSU in Natural Resources, I began learning more about sustainable resource use, environmental effects on health, and started to realize the true definition of sustainable and livable communities. It was amazing to me, to find the parallel of effects that resource degradation and poverty have on one's community. What was also surprising to me was the lack of connectivity people made when they talked about "sustainable communities". All of which encompassed solutions to problems that didn't include the people below the poverty line.

Following graduation, I began a 6 month internship at Habitat for Humanity, where it became seemingly clear to me that I had made the connection. And from that point on I knew that I wanted to work with

connecting people in poverty to a more sustainable lifestyle through engaging awareness and creating opportunities only considered for the wealthy.

The opportunity that being a VISTA member provides is one that no other program could give me. It's a structured year of service, that allows me to be creative, supportive, and develop solutions to the many environmental and poverty related challenges the community faces. Purposely, I aim to make some kind of impact by "giving back" to a community that needs it and being a VISTA member gives me the leverage to use my ideas, education and personal experience for the greater good. I look forward to this year of service, as it will shape and forever become a part of who I am.

## FROM THE FIELD: Stories from Our Communities

### How Head Start of Lincoln County is Building Sustainability

**Written by: Shawn Cardwell, VISTA Member**

The hardest thing an AmeriCorps\*VISTA is assigned to do is make it seem like we are still here, when we are not.

For instance, I have been developing the Friends of Head Start in Lincoln County throughout my 2009 year of service. This group is a wonderful group of Newport community members who see the importance and fun in public awareness projects, program advocacy and fundraising. Friends are taking the initiative to connect Head Start with other non-profit programs that will benefit families, such as the snack backpack program that provides food for students over the weekends. Friends are also helping organize a fundraiser, Dinner Down the Bay, that they believe will be successful enough to do again next year...they are already planning for it! Others are helping to beautify the Newport Head Start center, which still has bare flower beds and walls due to its newness.

While these volunteers have taken much initiative and shown much enthusiasm, I am still a bit worried how it will work without me. To ease my mind I have asked the Friends to organize themselves a bit. I did not want to put pressure on the volunteers and make them think it would be a burden, so we have left room to share the responsibilities while ensuring someone will do it.

All of these responsibilities are based in communication.

1. Communication between members: I have sent a mailing list of all current Friends so they can talk when they need to and I've written a welcome letter for new Friends.

2. Consistency of who communicates: I have made a standard layout for an agenda at meetings. Friends decided to elect a secretary at the beginning of each meeting.

3. Communication between the service group and who they serve: Friends decided the person taking point in a project will be the liaison with Head Start. They will be in contact with Head Start Program Manager, Robyn Myers. She will be in contact with them also, if ever she needs something from them.

4. Standardized communication with the public: by making standard communication techniques it will hopefully become familiar with the community and easier for them to trust and participate. I have created a file of documents I've used throughout the year to get in contact with service groups, businesses and community partners, which the Friends will be able to update and reuse next year with little effort or time.

As long as people keep talking to each other, listening to what each other need and what the other has to offer, there can be productive and helpful partnerships. Our programs need to communicate constantly within, making sure every worker and person served is getting what they need out of the program, including recognition. We need to get the word out on opportunities for community participation. The number one reason American citizens claim they do not donate money to charities is because 'No one asks.' The easiest way to fail is to not show up. Let's get those who have something to share a venue to share it. Let's get those who have a need a venue to find it.

### Help Expand Jackson Street Youth Shelter to Linn County

**Written by: Jennifer Crist, VISTA Member**

When Jackson Street Youth Shelter, Inc. opened its doors in 2001, it was evident there was a need; there was not and still is not, another shelter designed for homeless and at-risk youth between Eugene and Salem, Or. Nearly nine years later, the shelter is finding itself stretched to meet the needs of both Benton and Linn counties, so an expansion plan for an additional shelter in Albany was crafted to better serve the greater Albany area. Though the need for a youth shelter in Albany has been recognized by local agencies and an action plan designed, there is still a lot of work to do. Community members and local businesses are needed for support while Jackson Street is looking for funding to purchase a property. Volunteers to aid in fundraising and community outreach are pivotal and we must move quickly. Each year the numbers of homeless and at-risk youth grow, and leaving the population underserved is not an option. If you would like to get involved by volunteering or serving on the expansion board, please contact the Albany Expansion Coordinator, Jennifer Crist at [volcoord@jsysi.org](mailto:volcoord@jsysi.org)