

OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER 2010

NorthState Rural Assets Project
AmeriCorps Quarterly Newsletter



Make a Difference Day Service Learning Project

When we started this project back in mid-October, we were unsure if the students would get behind it. The goal was a general one: creating a scrapbook with the students. The theme was one that we wanted to let the students choose, however, we wanted to set some guidelines. The end result was a service project that affected our students, our school and the entire district.

Once we had set the theme as "school pride", we began by getting page ideas from the students. The list was set on the board and the students were allowed to choose their favorites. There were a few repeated ideas, such as the school mascot and drama club. This we allowed, letting the students work together and feed off each other's ideas. As time went on, the students locked down their ideas with a draft page, sketching out locations for pictures and clip art. The project was starting to get off the ground.

The next stage was taking the pictures for the scrapbook. The students had lots of fun borrowing our cameras and taking pictures during break time. The staff and student body were really supportive, always ready to pose for a snapshot. Another critical player on the team was our site supervisor, Mrs. Morgan. She graciously loaned us the use of her scrap booking supplies and classroom time for this project. There were times when she was the most enthusiastic of all of us! She also went out of her way to bring her photo printer to class (complete with new ink cartridge) so that the students could print their pictures in the classroom. This project wouldn't have turned out 1/10th as good without all her support.

The final stage of the project was submitting the scrapbook to the new owners. The students chose to give the scrapbook to the Primary School as a look ahead to what they will get to do once they reach 6th grade. While the exchange hasn't been made yet, we are confident that the students will love it. More importantly, our class discovered a lot about themselves through the process of encouraging others.

Donna Walton and Kathlee Yates
AmeriCorps Asset Coaches



A Project of the Child Abuse
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2280 Benton Dr Bldg C, Ste B
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Emergency Preparedness Event/Make a Difference

Supporting individuals with disabilities and their families at this event was one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences of my life. I loved seeing the excitement in their eyes and the enthusiasm they showed as they came through the doors at the EPF event that I was fortunate enough to be a part of.

One of the things I was most impressed with was the dedication and commitment that the AmeriCorps volunteers and our community shared in the pursuit of making it possible for each person with a disability to participate fully in our community and to support the effort of each individual to determine his/her own future.

As I walked through the event that day I thought about what an honor it was to be apart of such an incredible organization as AmeriCorps. I met so many wonderful people that day and was truly touched by the developmentally disabled individuals teaching their peers important information and modeling leadership and dignity.

I went to this EPF event thinking that I would be helping people with disabilities learn about safety in our community but instead I was the one who learned about the capabilities of this unique community and the incredible and loving people they are.

AmeriCorps was founded on the belief that by using your skills and ideals toward helping others and meeting critical needs in the community, make not only your community a better place but the world a better place as a whole. And this event was a perfect example of that belief.

Eric Friend
AmeriCorps Parent Partner



Make a Difference Day/Service Learning Project

On November 10, 2010 we piled into two vehicles and traveled down to Davis. We had 7 of our youth ready to get out of Redding for a day. As the youth crammed into the back seats, it was only jokes, stories, and singing that could be heard. It was amazing how many smiles I saw just on the way there. We decided to walk the campus for about an hour dreaming of the possibilities of one day these youth becoming a "University student," all while dodging the heavy flow of bike traffic. And so, they dropped their jaws with amazement; never had they seen so many young people so active. Every statue was a photo op, and every moment was one of bonding, so they took in the clean air, and enjoyed the moment of what is possible... It was our intention to tour the campus but not our only purpose. We were invited to come as advisors for program facilitators in the social work profession. We were to discuss what curriculum should be included when training future social workers.

This was an opportunity first and foremost for these youth to understand just what advocacy is, and why it is important. We spend the first hour getting to know other youth, and then broke into groups where the youth would share their ideas of what modules should be revised. After brainstorming they wrote these ideas on paper while a youth presented the general idea to the rest of the attendees. Some of the points that came up were: confidentiality, not splitting up families, knowing what options exist, and giving youth more choice when it comes to where they are placed. What really excited me was that two of our most introverted youth were the ones who spoke the most. It seemed they understood the importance of this discussion and took advantage of the opportunity that was before them. In their eyes this was a chance to speak for foster youth who are currently in the system. Even though many of these youth suffer from low self-esteem it did not seem to matter here. On this day they had a voice, an opinion that mattered and most of all...validation.

Once the evening came to a close an offer of future collaboration was extended to the youth by the facilitators for the UC Davis program for social work. These youth came away not only confident by feeling valued, but were informative and clearly conveyed the message that foster youth know what is best for other foster youth. On the way home the youth could not stop talking about the day, the program and of course the school. This was their first interaction with a University. As we parted ways they spoke of the next opportunity to show of their new learned skill, which is advocacy.

Patricia Boone
AmeriCorps Asset Coach

Parent Partner : Success Story

I had the pleasure of working with a single mom who was referred to our program as a Path 1. When we received her referral she was homeless with her three children ages eight, eleven and fifteen. She has a mental disability of social anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder. She had been living in her car with her children for almost two months.

This mom had travelled south to attempt to get family support, but instead managed to get a big ticket from the police for a number of car repairs that needed tending. Due to lack of support she returned to Redding in desperation. Now she had a failure to appear in court for her ticket and was incurring huge late fees and fines.

Her phone had initially been out of service. By the time I was able to make contact she had found a place to live in a neighborhood known for drugs and vandalism. She made the interior cozy for her children and keeps a close eye on them, not allowing them outdoors alone. Her hope is to find a family friendly environment for her children. She transports her children out of the district to schools that are in good neighborhoods and the children are thriving academically. She wants to pursue her nursing degree and hopes that she will find some part-time work that she can handle mentally. Her children were in need of school supplies and clothes and her growing debt was causing extreme stress.

The first thing that she asked help with was her ticket, which was now in the thousands. As her community advocate I wrote to the court, explaining her situation at the time of the ticket and her situation now. I asked for leniency so that she and her family would have a chance to move forward. The courts responded and reduced her fine to less than a third of what was owed, and arranged a manageable payment plan. She was incredibly relieved and grateful.

This client was already on the HUD wait list, so we filled out applications for all the suitable subsidized housing. She is very hopeful that she will be in a new place. After filling out and turning in all the applications she no longer felt trapped, as she knew it was just a matter of time for her name to come up.

The Parent Partner Program helped to pay her rent and her utility bill, which made it possible for her to get school supplies and some clothing essentials. Our program helped with gas cards so that she could continue to transport her children to the schools that they were thriving in. The relief that she felt was palpable, my eyes are tearing up just remembering that moment when the stress seemed to dissipate.

I encouraged her, despite her anxiety, to pursue her education, perhaps starting with some online classes. She found a couple of her required classes offered online at Butte College. She is now enrolled and doing really well! She even has a social life now; it is wonderful to see the smile on her face. This client is motivated and moving herself forward. She was able to utilize help despite her anxiety and has been impressed by the community support she has received in Shasta County. The value she places on education makes me very hopeful for the continuing success of this family.

Carol Barber
AmeriCorps Community Parent Partner



