

# AmeriCorps

# NEWS

FOR AMERICORPS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE NETWORK

## AmeriCorps *is* Getting Things Done, Study Finds

As AmeriCorps approaches its five-year anniversary, you and the other 100,000 Americans who have served as AmeriCorps members have reason to be proud. A new independent study shows that the efforts of AmeriCorps members have strengthened neighborhoods, made nonprofits more productive, and inspired others to get more involved in their communities.

Aguirre International found that programs have provided intensive results-driven service and have benefited communities, nonprofits, and members in the following ways:

- directly assisting millions of people, including children, seniors, and victims of natural disasters;
- helping nonprofit organizations do more for communities;
- getting citizens involved in solving problems; and
- motivating people of all ages to take an active role in their communities.

One of the most significant findings is what AmeriCorps members get out of their service experience. Aguirre

reported that serving in AmeriCorps greatly improves participants' skills in the areas employees look for—communication, interpersonal skills, analytic problem-solving, understanding of organizational systems, team skills, and technology. Members developed new skills and enhanced existing skills, the study shows, particularly those who entered with low skills and with little employment experience.

**Making Nonprofits More Productive.** AmeriCorps benefits nonprofit organizations by acting as a catalyst for change, Aguirre found. Because of their collaboration with AmeriCorps, many institutions have been able to expand, improve, and restore service to their communities.

**Strengthening Communities.** Besides the benefits of direct service (such as better schools and safer neighborhoods), AmeriCorps strengthens communities by helping them share and expand resources and by recruiting additional volunteers. Communities responded favorably to AmeriCorps, Aguirre reported, and there was little

overlap or conflict between AmeriCorps activities and the work of other community organizations. Aguirre also found that AmeriCorps “sparked community interest and participation, infused hope into depressed communities, and raised awareness of local problems.”

**Increasing Civic Responsibility.** The AmeriCorps experience helped instill the value of community involvement. Nearly all AmeriCorps members (99 percent) reported plans to continue some form of community service in the future, although only 56 percent of them reported involvement prior to serving. Many members have been motivated to pursue careers in public service and community-oriented work.

**Return on the Investment.** The direct benefits to communities and AmeriCorps members are at least \$1.66 for every dollar spent, said Aguirre, noting that the figure is conservative.

As an AmeriCorps member, you help your community every day. And the Aguirre study shows that together with other AmeriCorps members, you are making a real difference in communities nationwide.



WHAT'S INSIDE...WHAT'S INSIDE... WHAT'S INSIDE... WHAT'S INSIDE... WHAT'S INSIDE...

Letter from President Clinton    Message from Harris Wofford  
The AmeriCorps Call to Service    Life After AmeriCorps    Tips for Staying Involved  
Career Success for Former AmeriCorps Members

# Welcome

**W**elcome to AmeriCorps News! This newsletter is designed to tell you what AmeriCorps members are doing, help you serve more effectively, and help you keep in touch with other AmeriCorps members.

This issue includes exciting new information about AmeriCorps' national accomplishments and

shares tips for staying involved after your term of service is over.

I'm sure you'll have ideas about how we can make this newsletter more useful, and I hope you'll share your suggestions with us. Send your comments to [amnews@cns.gov](mailto:amnews@cns.gov) or mail them to AmeriCorps News, Corporation for National Service, 1201 New York Avenue, N.W.,

Washington, D.C. 20525.

AmeriCorps News is also on-line at [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)—just click on "Information for Members" to keep up with the latest news and resources.



Deb Jospin  
Director of AmeriCorps

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Mark R. Miller,

Director of Publications

Siobhan Dugan, Senior Writer

Karen Levine and Carol Hardy,

Graphic Designers

Tara Murphy, Director of Public Affairs



AmeriCorps News  
Corporation for National Service  
1201 New York Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20525

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What do you think of AmeriCorps News? Let us know at [amnews@cns.gov](mailto:amnews@cns.gov).

## THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Summer 1999

Dear AmeriCorps Graduate:

Congratulations on the successful completion of your AmeriCorps term of service. I am delighted to join your family and friends in celebrating this impressive accomplishment.

Over the past year, you have helped prove that national service works. In classrooms and police stations, on neighborhood cleanup crews and crime watches, in rural areas and urban centers, AmeriCorps members like you have strengthened communities and supported people who are striving to make the most of their lives. Your dedication and your commitment to serving others have helped AmeriCorps "get things done" throughout our nation.

Now that you are completing your term of service, I hope you will continue to find ways to serve. America needs your enthusiasm, your skills, your experience, and your leadership. Many challenges lie ahead, both for you and for our country. I am confident that your experience in AmeriCorps will help you meet those challenges.

Thank you again for your service, and best wishes for much continued success.

Sincerely,



## Message from Harris Wofford

Can you envision a country where every third-grade child can read? Where every citizen has affordable housing? Where people feel safe in their neighborhoods? Where people can get the support they need to live healthy, productive, active lives?

Through AmeriCorps service, you've helped to bring that vision closer to reality.

This year, AmeriCorps celebrated its 100,000th member—a milestone it took the Peace Corps more than 20 years to reach. In the past five years, AmeriCorps members like you have taught children to read, made neighborhoods safer, built affordable housing, helped communities recover from natural disasters, and more.

In achieving these results, you and other members have reached another goal—demonstrating for others the importance of community involvement.

I hope you will carefully consider what it meant when you pledged to serve "this year and beyond." Congratulations on what you've already accomplished, and best wishes as you continue to "get things done."



Harris Wofford  
Chief Executive Officer  
Corporation for National Service

## The Call to Service: Help Recruit the Next Class of AmeriCorps Members!



AmeriCorps is in the midst of its largest recruitment campaign ever, and you are an important part of it. Recruiting can take many forms, and most of them take little time and effort. Here are a few ways you can help:

1. **Wear your AmeriCorps t-shirt.** You can help raise awareness at concerts, at festivals, and in your own neighborhood by simply wearing your shirt or an AmeriCorps button.
2. **Ask the program where you served what you can do to help find new members.**
3. **Talk to people you meet while doing service projects in your community.**
4. **Tell people in your office, school, church, or synagogue about your experience as an AmeriCorps member.**
5. **Return to your high school or college to tell students there about opportunities with AmeriCorps.**
6. **Offer to help the national AmeriCorps recruitment office by calling 1-800-942-2677.**
7. **Keep up with the latest news about AmeriCorps by visiting [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)**—and share information with your friends.
8. **Participate in alumni events.** (For information on how to stay involved, call AmeriCorps Alums at 202-729-8180 or visit [www.americorpsalums.org](http://www.americorpsalums.org).)

Your efforts to spread the word about AmeriCorps will support the Call to Service, a national recruitment drive launched in February 1999 by President Clinton to help enroll more than 50,000 new AmeriCorps members over the next year. Asking "Are You Up to the Challenge?" the campaign focuses on the impact members have on the communities they serve and the important personal growth they experience.

Among the elements of the recruitment campaign are:

- print ads featuring AmeriCorps members and their experiences (visit [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org) to read their stories);
  - a direct mail campaign to college seniors;
  - a television public service announcement (PSA), "I am AmeriCorps," which MTV produced; and
  - recruitment events at college campuses and communities nationwide.
- communities nationwide



**GET MORE INFO** Keep up with the latest news about AmeriCorps by visiting [www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org)

# What's Your Next Step?

## Life After AmeriCorps

Is there life after AmeriCorps? According to the staff at AmeriCorps Alums, your biggest challenge may be deciding what you want to do with your skills and experience. "AmeriCorps alumni have found their AmeriCorps experience helps them succeed as students, as entrepreneurs, and as professionals in the nonprofit field and in the private sector," says Katie Floyd, membership coordinator. "Employers look for the exact type of skills and leadership that AmeriCorps members offer."

Before you know it, your AmeriCorps service will come to an end, and you may already be thinking ahead about what you want to do, and how and where you can do it. AmeriCorps has prepared a handbook that may help you sort out some of your options, whether you're thinking about getting a job, going to school, or doing another year of service.

Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps includes exercises to help you evaluate your accomplishments as an AmeriCorps member and figure out how to combine your skills and interests.

Specifically, Next Steps gives you tips on:

- ◆ writing a resume and interviewing effectively;
- ◆ identifying jobs in your areas of interest;
- ◆ using the web for your job search;
- ◆ applying for college or graduate programs; and

◆ staying involved in service. Your AmeriCorps service will always remain with you in some way. Your decisions about your career, family, community, and civic responsibilities may be affected by your AmeriCorps experience.

**"Employers look for the exact type of skills and leadership that AmeriCorps members offer."**

**—Katie Floyd,  
AmeriCorps Alums**

Like Peace Corps volunteers who serve two years abroad but are then charged with "bringing the world back home," you too have a responsibility once your term of service has ended. Part of your pledge as an AmeriCorps member is to get things done "this year and beyond." How will you carry out this commitment?

Next Steps points to several options and resources for continuing to serve, such as:

- ◆ serving another term as an



AmeriCorps member or an AmeriCorps Leader ([www.americorps.org](http://www.americorps.org) or 1-800-942-2677);

- ◆ getting involved with AmeriCorps Alums, ([www.acorpsalums.org](http://www.acorpsalums.org) or 202-729-8180);
- ◆ applying to the Peace Corps ([www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) or 1-800-254-8540); and
- ◆ participating in service projects locally (try [www.servenet.com](http://www.servenet.com)).

If you don't already have a copy of Next Steps, you can order one by calling 1-800-860-2684. The end of your AmeriCorps term of service is a time of great opportunity. Take advantage of this time to make decisions that work for you.

What are you planning to do after you finish your AmeriCorps term of service?

How will you use your education award?

Let us know at [amnews@cns.gov](mailto:amnews@cns.gov).

**GET MORE INFO** Get involved with AmeriCorps Alums! ([www.acorpsalums.org](http://www.acorpsalums.org) or 202-729-8180) To get a copy of Next Steps, call 1-800-860-2684.

# AmeriCorps Alumni Keep on Serving

**W**hether they've served in their hometown or on the other side of the country, taught children to read or organized neighborhood safety patrols, AmeriCorps alums seem to have one thing in common: a desire to continue serving.

Erin Moore, who served with City Year Columbus, now is a full-time college student, majoring in French at Ohio State University, and a part-time staff member for the Governor's Community Service Council. But that packed schedule doesn't keep her from participating in numerous community service projects. "Before I did AmeriCorps," she said, "I had never done a lick of community service in my life. I feel a commitment to participate whenever I have the free time now, which definitely didn't exist before."

Moore's newfound commitment to service is not unusual among AmeriCorps members, according to a recent independent study conducted by Aguirre International. The survey showed that while only 56 percent of AmeriCorps members had performed community service of some type

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**While only 56 percent of AmeriCorps members had performed community service of some type before joining AmeriCorps, a full 99 percent now say they plan to make continued service a priority.**

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Like many other former AmeriCorps members, Moore has stayed involved with her program. She served as a project coordinator during a City Year serve-a-thon on Make A Difference Day, coordinating a team of 50 or 60 volunteers who created a community garden on the east side of Columbus. Since that project was completed, she's been serving as a Young Heroes team leader. She described the projects as a "mini-City Year for middle school kids." On Saturdays, the students attend morning workshops on topics ranging from citizenship to drug and alcohol education, before participating in service projects in the afternoon.

AmeriCorps\*NCCC alum Gardner Humphreys had a history of community service in college. Now the manager of Communities of Promise and State Initiatives at America's Promise in Virginia, he volunteers with numerous organizations when he's not working. He became a team leader with DC Cares, a group that organizes a variety of one-time volunteer activities. He's active with

**"Doing AmeriCorps showed me the importance of direct service."**

**—Gardner Humphries**

the local Humane Society and the Washington chapter of AmeriCorps Alums, which is setting up a "Second Saturday of Service" project that will bring alums together on a regular basis for neighborhood cleanups and playground improvements.

"Doing AmeriCorps showed me the importance of direct service," he said. "Even if you do go on to work in service or the community development field, there's still nothing that can quite take the place of direct service."

Colleen Hughes also was active in community service before her AmeriCorps experience, but from a very different perspective. As a mother of four children, most of her involvement was related to her children and their projects at school or church. Now a student, she's a member of several local boards focusing on youth and neighborhood improvement in her hometown of Tulsa, Okla.

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**"I really didn't get involved with the needs of the community until I found myself in some of those areas with AmeriCorps."**

**—Colleen Hughes**

with AmeriCorps working with at-risk students in communities that didn't have some of the things that I took for granted," she said. One of the projects she works with focuses on getting 14- to 16-year-olds involved in community service.

"Some of these kids have nothing to do, so I'm working with the Community Service Council to recruit them into community service projects. Through community service, they can get job experience and meet people, and learn that where they're going to get a good feeling

in life is from giving something back to the community."

Hughes, who is 50, views AmeriCorps as a great experience and would like to see more people her age become members.

"AmeriCorps took me into areas of the community that I would never have ventured into. I was a content suburban mom in my content suburban life. AmeriCorps really opened up my eyes to whole areas, whole communities and their needs that I never would have known."

For Hughes, Humphreys, and Moore, continuing their involvement is a natural part of their post-AmeriCorps life. As Moore put it, "I need to get out there and get my hands dirty and participate."

How are you planning to serve after you finish your AmeriCorps term of service? Let us know at [amnews@cns.gov](mailto:amnews@cns.gov).

**GET  
MORE  
INFO**

To find out about opportunities to serve in your area with former AmeriCorps members, visit [www.americorpsalums.org/local.html](http://www.americorpsalums.org/local.html)



# Now What?

## AmeriCorps Service, Education Awards Open Doors

**F**inish up that undergraduate degree. Take the leap into the working world. Head for grad school.

Armed with your education award and the skills you've gained as an AmeriCorps member, those are just a few of the options that will be open to you. While making the right decision may seem overwhelming, remember that your AmeriCorps experience is sure to impress employers, colleges, and others.

Following are examples of former AmeriCorps members who have found that there is life after AmeriCorps.

Stephanie A. Beck Borden, a former AmeriCorps\*VISTA member who developed a volunteer program for a child abuse organization in Indiana, now works for Research America in Arlington, Va. "I coordinate grassroots advocacy campaigns for medical research advocacy," she said.

"We're trying to get the scientists more involved in advocacy, to explain to others what they do and how their research affects the economy — generating jobs and increased building. People say they're very interested in research issues, but they don't know what the scientists are doing. We're trying to bring the two groups together."

Dan Condon, who was with Public Allies in San Diego as an

AmeriCorps member, is now a program manager and director of education and training for Public Allies in Milwaukee, Wisc. Since finishing his AmeriCorps service, he has also interned at Eagle Rock High School in Colorado, a year-round residential school for teenagers who have not been successful in traditional school settings. Condon returns to Eagle Rock three times a year to teach the school's HIV/AIDS curriculum.

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**Your AmeriCorps experience is sure to impress employers, colleges, and others.**

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Before joining AmeriCorps, "I was clueless about the nonprofit sector. I don't think AmeriCorps helped me realize what I want to do, but it opened my eyes to things that I didn't know. My professional skills were sharpened in that working at a nonprofit for 10 months really showed me how a nonprofit operates."

Hillary Creely served at the Latin American Youth Center in Washington, D.C., while a student at George Washington University. After graduating, she headed for grad school and is now working on a doctorate in the integrated fields

of molecular biology, cell biology, and biochemistry at Brown University in Providence, R.I.

Creely is considering teaching at the high school level. "I think I can make more of a difference with students who wouldn't otherwise get exposure to advanced scientific ideas," she explained. As an AmeriCorps member, helping teenagers get their GEDs "made me confident that I could work with that age group and ability level."

Zach Joseph serves as liaison to colleges and universities in California's central coast region for AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), an organization that matches high school and middle school students with tutors and mentors.

"The transition [from AmeriCorps] has been good because I've put a lot of energy into it," Joseph said. "It's been a tough transition in that it involves further defining career goals, finding the ideal job, and in my case, moving."

Joseph's AmeriCorps experience spoiled him in a sense, because "I want to be involved with programs that are as fulfilling as my AmeriCorps experience. It's easier to get into AmeriCorps than into some jobs."

Paula Buchanan used her education award to earn an MBA and MPH after serving with the New Orleans Youth Action Corps in 1995. Now she is with American Management Systems, where she tests software.

"My work doesn't tie into AmeriCorps, except for the team

skills I learned, but that would apply anywhere.”

Buchanan found the transition to the corporate world a smooth one. “I have a unique perspective that every work environment is the same except for the way you dress,” she said. “Corporate America and not-for-profits are more similar than people think.” Like many other AmeriCorps alums, Buchanan places a high priority on service. She’s involved with the Make A Wish Foundation, which grants wishes to terminally ill children.

For Borden, full-time service is not just a part of her past — it’s also in her future. She and her husband plan to volunteer with the Fourth World Movement, an international anti-poverty organization that serves people in developed countries such

as the United States in addition to Third World locations. Her AmeriCorps service has helped make this plan possible.

“I used the ed award to pay off loans that probably would have taken eight years to pay off,” she said. “I have choices now in some things I can do with my husband in the future that wouldn’t have been possible if I hadn’t had the ed award.”

So if you find that one door is closed, the next one may be open, thanks to your service as an AmeriCorps member.

Just ask AmeriCorps alums.

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How will AmeriCorps help you achieve your goals?

How has AmeriCorps changed your future plans?

Let us know at [amnews@cns.gov](mailto:amnews@cns.gov).

## AmeriCorps Nears Five-Year Celebration

This fall, members and programs will mark the five-year anniversary of AmeriCorps. Events are being planned throughout the country, and the next issue of AmeriCorps News will have more details.

Get ready to celebrate and to build on AmeriCorps’ legacy of service.



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