

Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County 2009-2010 Annual Report



Give back. Make a difference. Change lives.



Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County is a state AmeriCorps program in partnership with Volunteer Florida, The Governor's Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and The Corporation for National and Community Service.

For the past 10 years, the program has been made possible by the generous contributions of our local partners, our donors and agencies and organizations that provided guidance and supervision of AmeriCorps members throughout Palm Beach County.

AmeriCorps, the domestic version of the Peace Corps, gives Americans the opportunity to apply their talents, education and skills to help others in communities throughout the United States.



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From August 2009 to July 2010, the Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County, through its Literacy AmeriCorps Program, trained and placed 24 full-time AmeriCorps members in sites throughout the county. This annual report is the story of their success, told mostly in their own articulate words.

In our county, the 2009-2010 members were assigned to 30 service sites, such as libraries, after school programs and centers where both children and adults are served. The members tutored underachieving children, worked with adults eager to learn English and served as graduation coaches for students at risk of dropping out.

At service sites, members' daily activities are supervised by full-time agency employees. The sites benefit by having talented, educated and teachable staff members to help them reach their goals. The Coalition benefits by having help to fulfill its mission.

In addition, the members benefit by having an exciting opportunity to fulfill their desire to give back, to make a difference and to see lives change.

To partner with the Coalition's Literacy AmeriCorps Program, to become an AmeriCorps member or to support this program as a volunteer or donor, contact Audrey McDonough, program director, at (800) 273-1030 or visit <http://www.literacyabc.org> (look for the Literacy AmeriCorps link under "programs"). You can also learn more through Facebook, by searching for "Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County."



Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County 2009-2010 Members

John Benson
Seth Blakeslee
Zoey Clock
Katie Coleman
Megan Conners
Hannah Custis
Chelsea Davis
Nathan Ellis
Bridget Fahrer
Rian Ganyard
Zech Glaize
Alex Greeley

Shawna Hershberger
Kate Landry
Alli Lazarus
Brandon Light
Bailey Lowenthal
Erin Mattes
Kathryn Mauck
Kate Murphy
Lindsey Nuzzo
Megan Richards
Stacy Soderstrom
Hillary Yale

"I plan to keep getting things done!"

-2010 member, Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County



“A fantastic year” for Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County



Maggie Dickenson
President of the Board

Give back. Make a difference. Change lives. These words capture the essence of the hope within the hearts of the young Americans who served our community, and their country, as Literacy AmeriCorps members this past year. These dedicated young people improved the quality of life in our community by promoting literacy, which is the core mission of our Coalition. From Boca Raton to Belle Glade, not only did Literacy AmeriCorps members teach, mentor and tutor, they brightened days and encouraged spirits. While they made new friends and had fun, they developed leadership skills that enhanced the non-profit sector in our county and their own chances for future success.

As one of the Literacy AmeriCorps members wrote, “This was a fantastic year for me, as I truly feel I made a difference in a number of my students’ lives.” It’s exciting to know that our Coalition provided such an opportunity for young Americans from all walks of life and all parts of our country. We were honored to have them with us. On behalf of my fellow board members, I invite you to be inspired by the dedication of our AmeriCorps members. The results are in and the news is great! Thank you for your support.

Literacy AmeriCorps to Nearly Double in Size

For the past two years, Literacy AmeriCorps, a program of the Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County made possible by Volunteer Florida and a significant group of local funders, has had a corps of 24 members serving in Palm Beach County. These members are recent college graduates who have a passion for service and have given a year of their lives to serve their country doing full-time teaching and tutoring while agreeing to live in poverty to do so. These young adults come from 16 states and 20 cities. They have served in 30 sites all over the county, greatly strengthening the literacy skills of hundreds of adults, children and families. This past year they contributed more than 45,000 hours of service.

I want to thank the members, site supervisors, financial supporters and particularly Coalition staff members Audrey McDonough and Brad Hertzberg for helping us reach our ambitious goals. I had the privilege of interviewing all 24 graduating AmeriCorps members. As they reflected on their year of service, I was tremendously impressed by their professionalism and dedication to their students. I wish them all the very best as they pursue their careers or further study. We are blessed that 13 of the members plan to make Palm Beach County their home.

Our AmeriCorps Program was honored in June in New York City at the America's Service Commission's Annual Meeting by inclusion in the 2010 edition of *Transforming Communities Through Service: A Collection of the Most Innovative AmeriCorps State Programs in the United States*. We will continue to transform our community in the coming year as our program expands to 40 members who will give 68,000 hours of service. Celebrate our progress with us as you read this report. People like you make our work possible!



Darlene Kostrub
Chief Executive Officer

Adult Literacy



Performance

Measure	Target	Result
Percent of adults who demonstrated increased literacy as measured by standardized assessments.	70%	82%
Percent of adult learners served who were pre and post-tested.	50%	94%
Percent of adult learners who reported more positive literacy-related attitudes and behaviors.	80%	90%
Number of adults who received one-to-one tutoring and small group instruction.	350	555



Each day, as Shawna Hershberger and I drove through the seemingly endless fields of sugarcane on our way to teach at the Glades Family Education Program in Belle Glade, we watched for gators on the canal banks and the sun rise over misty swamps as we mentally prepared for work.

We shared ideas and plans about teaching adult students relevant English topics in innovative and practical ways. Our students reinforced their knowledge of giving and receiving directions through classroom treasure hunts and practiced for their CASAS exams by playing interactive Jeopardy games.

Shawna's class developed and performed in their own fashion shows to practice clothing vocabulary and to become more comfortable speaking out loud in English.

One of our favorite aspects of serving at the Glades was the daily opportunity to teach valuable English skills to people with whom we had built personal connections. We love that we had the chance to brighten students' days and improve their lives, while they, in turn, taught us about their cultures and made us feel appreciated.

Every day was a chance to make someone feel important, regardless of what was occurring in his or her home life. We helped students obtain their citizenship and pass exams that will qualify them for jobs outside of the packing houses and the fields.

Shawna and I realize that, in the newly learned words of one of my students, "This is no piece of cake!" That was true, but we were inspired by our students' motivation and we are glad we could help them achieve their goals.

*- Megan Connors, Member
Glades Family Education Program*

Children's Literacy



Performance		
Goal	Target	Result
Percent of children who demonstrated 20% improvement in reading skills on standardized assessments.	80%	89%
Percent of children who indicated more positive reading behaviors and attitudes.	75%	80%
Number of preschool and elementary school children who participated in literacy enrichment activities led by Literacy AmeriCorps members.	300	529

Children's Literacy



“I can smell the beach from where I work,” was among my first thoughts as I entered my AmeriCorps service site, Boynton Beach City Library.

Recently expanded and remodeled, the bustling facility was filled with literary resources and state-of-the-art technology.

As an avid reader who loves libraries and books, I felt right at home. Since I was the first-ever AmeriCorps member serving at this site, my supervisor asked me to develop and implement an after school homework help program. Though sometimes challenging, I enjoyed both the freedom and responsibility of creating the program from scratch.

On a typical day, the first round of children arrived around 3 p.m. and others bounced in and out until about 7 p.m. – sometimes later. Children from first to eighth grade sought my expertise on everything from understanding antonyms to multiplying two-digit numbers.

When I think about exclamations like, “I was the only person in class who got this right!” or “I actually understood what the teacher was saying because you taught me yesterday!” I am reminded that this experience was indescribably rewarding.

By the end of the day I was usually covered in eraser dust and had cranium fuel leaking from my ears, but the homework was done and I felt good about having helped so much.

And I could still smell the beach.

- Lindsey Nuzzo, Member
Boynton Beach City Library

Graduation Coaching



Performance

Measure	Goal	Result
Percent of youth who remained in school or graduated.	70%	92%
Number of "at-risk" youth, ages 14-21, who were coached, tutored, and mentored in school and community programs.	250	524

Graduation Coaching



When we look back to our high school years, what do we remember?

Stressing over five-page papers, juggling all our classes, after school activities and sports, working on school plays, band/orchestra, hanging out with friends and having our completely overbearing parents hover on our every move in that annoyingly supportive way? Or having more freedom to take on a job or just to relax and gossip with friends about our secret crushes?

I, for one, can say that my high school experience included many of the above. And I always knew that I was lucky for the opportunities my home life, educational standards and supportive staff provided, even though I was too cool to think beyond what would go with the jeans I wanted to wear the next day.

For students at Royal Palm Beach High School, this is not always the case. Many students whom I worked with did not have much support to succeed, yet they faced adversity at every turn, in school and at home. Constantly, my biggest concern with students was attendance. Once they started missing multiple days in a row, it was an uphill battle to catch them before it became a habit.

Every interaction with a student, however, provided a chance to instill hope, to encourage them to turn their lives around and not be a part of the repeating cycle of struggling youth. As a graduation coach, this was my goal. Graduation is the main focus, but the true focus is seeing beyond that single event and helping them to be the most successful individual they can be.

*- Kate Murphy, Member
Royal Palm Beach High School*

Volunteer Recruitment



Performance		
Measure	Target	Result
Number of new community volunteers recruited, supported or trained.	150	408
Number of hours contributed by new volunteers to community service projects.	1500	2080



The many cultures of Palm Beach County converged on Monday, January 18, at Sharing Dreams Across Cultures, a traditional major service project event sponsored by Literacy AmeriCorps in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. More than 180 children and adults attended the event held at Highland Elementary School in Lake Worth. Participants enjoyed a wide variety of creative cultural activities organized and conducted by 24 Literacy AmeriCorps members and more than 50 volunteers. Many of the volunteers were recruited by members. Many more signed up that day, declaring their desire to help with future Literacy AmeriCorps service projects.

Members passed out more than 500 books, many on the life and legacy of Dr. King, as attendees enjoyed food, music, games and other activities.

The centerpiece of the event was a “wall of dreams” compiled by the Palm Beach County students of Literacy AmeriCorps members. The wall was a colorful display of

mini-posters that declared children’s dreams and indicated their country of birth. The purpose of the activity was to demonstrate that despite our differences, dreams truly are often shared across cultures.

Members Kathryn Mauck, Shawna Hershberger, Nate Ellis and Hannah Custis led the organizing for this event.



Life's most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others?”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Service Projects



Throughout the year, Literacy AmeriCorps members staffed service projects in partnership with the following organizations:

- Adopt a Family Christmas and Santa Shoppe
- American Association of Caregiving Youth
 - Holiday Festival
 - Camp Treasure
 - Beach Cleanup
- Boca Raton Advisory Board for People with Disabilities
 - Boating and Beach Bash
 - Slam Dunk for a Healthy Lifestyle (with Shake-a-Leg Miami)
- Boys and Girls Club of Palm Beach County
 - Kids day (Delray)
 - Thanksgiving Dinner (Florence DeGeorge)
- Bridges Beacon Help for Bridges Housing Partnerships
- DePorres PLACE Restoration Project
- Fitkids Triathlon at Gaines Park
- Florida Dept. of Parks and Recreation's Fire Fest
- Habitat For Humanity
- Help for Haiti: Haitian Citizen Task Force
- Imagine Schools-Chancellor Campus Help Project
- Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County
 - Sharing Dreams Across Cultures Martin Luther King Day Event
 - Spooktacular Storytime
 - Village Readers Health Fair
- Locks of Love Event
- Polar Express: West Palm Beach Library
- Palm Beach County Health Department Slam Dunk Event
- Palm Beach Marathon Emergency Operations Center Event
- Peggy Adams Animal Shelter restoration
- Quantum House Service Project
- Soccer Day: Farmworkers' Children's Council
- Special Olympics
 - Bowling Event
 - Track and Field Event
- Turtlefest: Loggerhead Marine Life Center
- Urban League
 - Christmas Volunteer Day
 - Help for Haiti
 - Turkey Giveaway (with Salvation Army)
- United Way of Palm Beach County
 - International Coastal Cleanup
 - Coastal Cleanup
 - STARS Conference
 - Tomato Gleaning
- YMCA of South County service project
- Zoo Fest at the Palm Beach Zoo

Soccer day was an event organized by the Junior League and was held for families living at the In the Pines housing complex in Delray Beach. The event gave the families a chance to socialize, be outside and enjoy games and delicious food and snow cones.

Besides soccer, kids enjoyed face painting, gifts, cookie decorating, finger painting, hula-hoop contests and bounce houses. A disc jockey played music and everyone danced and had a good time.

The main attraction of the day, however, was soccer. Luis Gajardo, the assistant men's soccer coach from Florida Atlantic University, generously donated

his time to play soccer with the kids. He started the day of soccer by setting up speed and agility drills. He then split the kids into four teams and had them warm-up by doing all of the different drills he had created. He then set up teams and an elimination tournament that led to one team proudly accepting their first place trophies, donated by Gajardo.

My favorite part of the day was getting to introduce my fellow AmeriCorps members to some of my awesome students. Needless to say, the event was a hit.

*- Rian Ganyard, Member
The Farmworkers' Children's Council*



Service Projects

A Fun, Fulfilling Year of Service



As program director for Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County, I was thrilled by the excellent service contributed by the 2009-2010 Literacy AmeriCorps members. I am especially happy to say that this year, 13 members, a record number, decided to stay in Palm Beach County. Three of the members will serve a second year with our program. The other 10 were hired by the site at which they served, by another organization or business or are still looking for work. (If you are looking to hire a top-notch employee, let me know).

These members join 29 other transplanted Literacy AmeriCorps members working in our community, for organizations such as Palm Beach State College, Vita Nova, Gulfstream Goodwill Transition to Life Academy, The Lord's Place, The Flagler Museum and even here at The Literacy Coalition (i.e., Brad Hertzberg and Megan Richards).

Members who stay in town use their education and experience to provide sustained, long-term benefits to local organizations. In other words, they continue to give back and keep getting things done for our community. Page 20 contains a list showing exactly where these new Palm Beach County residents have settled, and where the other 2009-2010 members have sailed to for the next phrase of their life's journey. It has been a pleasure to work with Literacy AmeriCorps for the past 10 years, and I look forward to another great year. In fact, 40 new members are already in town, eager to help get things done.

- Audrey McDonough, Program Director
(Pictured upper right)



They Came. They Served. They Stayed.



“I cannot speak highly enough about the caliber of the AmeriCorps tutors. The AmeriCorps members always become a part of the family at the club in which they are serving. They are trained to help with the reading but the extra attention they provide for children adds a great deal emotionally as well as educationally.”

***- Barbara Goldner, Education Director
Boys & Girls Club of Palm Beach County***

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Literacy AmeriCorps Staff

Darlene Kostrub

Chief Executive Officer

Audrey McDonough

Literacy AmeriCorps Program Director

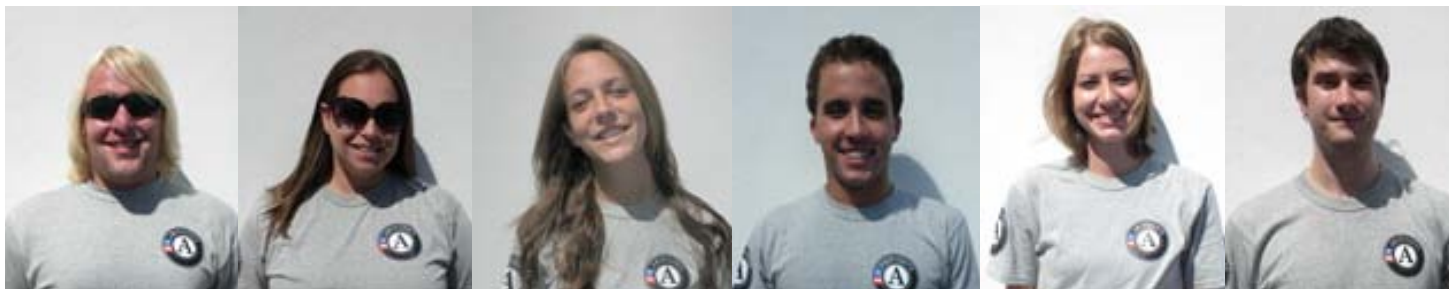
Brad Hertzberg

Literacy AmeriCorps Coordinator

Megan Richards

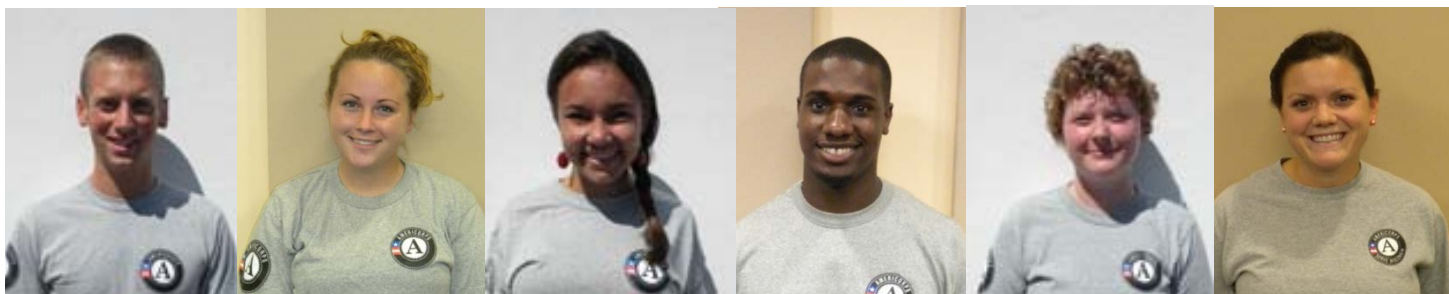
Literacy AmeriCorps Assistant

Literacy AmeriCorps Members



Literacy AmeriCorps Members who Moved On

Member	State	College	Service Site	Next Step
Seth Blakeslee	IN	Hanover College	Forest Hill Community High School	Graduate school in Kentucky
Katie Coleman	PA	Penn State	Village Readers	Graduate school in Michigan
Hannah Custis	MD	St. John's College/ Chesapeake Comm. Coll.	Adopt-a-Family of the Palm Beaches and Bridges Beacon	Graduate school in New York
Chelsea Davis	NJ	Vanderbilt University	Urban League of PBC and Riviera Beach Boys and Girls Club	Graduate school in New York
Nate Ellis	IN	Depauw University	DePorres Place	Race coordinator in Ohio
Bridget Fahrer	IL	Ohio University	All 'Bout Children	Moved to Ohio to find work
Rian Ganyard	OR	Western Oregon University	RCMA and In The Pines	AmeriCorps in Washington
Zech Glaize	GA	Dartmouth College	Ed Venture	College in New Hampshire
Kembra Landry	GA	Erskine College	American Association of Caregiving Youth	Graduate school in Georgia
Erin Mattes	OH	Kent State University	West Palm Beach Public Library and Florence DeGeorge Boys and Girls Club	Graduate school in Ohio
Hillary Yale	MD	Ohio State University	John I. Leonard High School	Moved to Maryland to find work



Literacy AmeriCorps Members



Literacy AmeriCorps Members who Stayed in Palm Beach County

Member	State	College	Service Site	Next Step
John Benson	SD	St. John's University	Chancellor Charter School and Noama Donneley Haggin Boys and Girls Club	Hired by Lowe's
Zoey Clock	MO	Simons Rock College/Bard College	Chancellor Charter School	Hired by Chancellor Charter School
Megan Conners	MA	Elmira College	Glades Family Education Program	Hired by America Learns
Alex Greeley	NC	Augsburg College	Adopt-a-Family of the Palm Beaches and Bridges Beacon	Hired by Northmore Elementary School
Shawna Hershberger	PA	King's College	Glades Family Education Program	Rejoined Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County
Alli Lazarus	FL	Florida State University	Olympic Heights High School	Enrolled in graduate school at Florida Atlantic University
Brandon Light	NY	State University of New York Plattsburgh	Palm Beach County Library Literacy Project	Rejoined Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County
Bailey Lowenthal	PA	New York University	Palm Beach Central High School	Hired by Palm Beach Central High School
Kathryn Mauck	VA	University of Virginia	Vita Nova	Hired by Vita Nova
Kate Murphy	NY	State University of New York at Oswego	Royal Palm Beach High School	Rejoined Literacy AmeriCorps Palm Beach County
Lindsey Nuzzo	PA	Westminster College	Boynton Beach City Library	Hired by Schoolhouse Children's Museum of Boynton Beach
Megan Richards	IN	Vanderbilt University	Village Readers	Hired by Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County
Stacy Soderstrom	WI	University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	DePorres Place	Hired by Keiser University





“The most amazing aspect of this program is the variety of experiences I lived in one year. We had trainings about Colombian Culture Day and child neurological development. We did hands-on service at our own sites and at several service projects. In no other year could you simultaneously learn so much, be immersed in team camaraderie and feel like you've had a lasting impression on others.”

*-Chelsea Davis
Urban League and Riviera Beach Boys and Girls Club*

“Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened...”

- Dr. Seuss

The AmeriCorps Pledge

I will get things done for America
– to make our people safer,
smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to
strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy,
I will take action.

Faced with conflict,
I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity,
I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with
me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member, and
I will get things done.



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