

**FASS
AmeriCorps
*VISTA
Initiative**



VISTA VISION

Volume 3, Issue 1

April 2005

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FASS VISTAs Serve Florida



*FASS
AmeriCorps
*VISTA
members at
the 10th
Annual
Service -
Learning
Institute in
Orlando,
November
2004*

**Blast From the Past:
News from previous FASS
AmeriCorps * VISTA**

Maureen Bradley

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If you live in Florida, there is a good chance there is a FASS AmeriCorps*VISTA member serving to effect positive change in your community. The Florida Alliance for Student Service VISTA Initiative currently has 19 VISTA members serving at 17 higher education and K-12 sites across Florida, from Miami to the Panhandle. VISTA members are coordinating service learning projects that focus on environmental education, the digital divide, youth corps, disaster relief, volunteer management, arts, hunger, AIDS prevention, and other poverty related topics.

Recent activities: Volunteer Leon Youth Corps paid tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by presenting the Leon County DREAM award for an essay contest that provided youth the opportunity to write about and reflect upon the legacy of Dr. King. Volunteer Services of Manatee County are partnering with Big Brothers Big Sisters to involve middle school students in the Community Emergency Response Team training during the Spring 2005 semester. FASS VISTA members in the Tallahassee Area along with partnering organizations are involved in the Service Learning Network. FASS VISTA members in Miami are strengthening partnerships between K-12 schools, higher education, and community-based organizations.

From January to March 2005 the FASS AmeriCorps*VISTA Initiative engaged 3,960 students and community volunteers in 53,600 hours of service-learning activities and generated approximately \$86,500 in cash (grants, donations) and \$95,700 of in-kind support. For more information contact Laryn Flikkema at (850) 488-9660 or lflikkema@admin.fsu.edu.



VISTA Vine, Part I

Ross Loomis
AmeriCorps*VISTA
CNRP / Tallahassee



When In Doubt, Try Dinosaurs

Saturday morning at the Apalachee Ridge Learning Center, Ben arrived with his entourage of aquatic invertebrates. He brought sea anemones, crown conchs, sea stars, fiddler crabs, and, the star of the show, a female horseshoe crab, looking pretty much the same now as it did 250 million years ago - older than the dinosaurs. Now all we needed was an audience.

Earlier, I had done my best to tell Ben that, due to the nature of the center he should expect, well, anything. It is a place where Apalachee Ridge neighborhood youth come and go as they please after school. (They are there by choice.) Once there, the service-learning volunteers must get to know the students, and from that relationship create learning experiences based on the child's unique interests. If a student isn't enjoying himself, gets bored, or hears the ice cream truck, he has every right to leave. During the week, we generally have a pretty

VISTA Reflection

Maureen Bradley
AmeriCorps*VISTA
CHESP/SPaRC
2004 - 2005



Expect the Unexpected

"I have four words: not what I expected." That's what I told our VISTA Leader, Lynn, when she asked for five words describing my overall experience as a VISTA member.

I never expected that it would be so hard to "connect the dots" from my workplan to the "war on poverty." I never expected to have days when I just didn't have enough to do, followed by weeks of too much to do. I never expected that one year could be so incredibly long, until I realized it was over.

The challenge of being a VISTA is so different than being in a direct service position, like NCCC or many other AmeriCorps programs. I need a lot more motivation to sit at a desk all day than I do to put a roof on a house or tutor

good crowd come do their homework and play on the computers, but on a Saturday there was no telling what would happen (tempting display aside).

As we were setting up, a brother and sister who lived next door noticed the center was open and came in to use the computers. They were completely uninterested in the large salt water tank we were filling. Though they lived next door, they rarely used the center, and while there they very much kept to themselves. I had no idea how to pique their interest in marine invertebrates, but I had to try.

"Hey guys, when you get a chance we have some pretty neat animals out here you can play with." They agreed that they'd check it out "when they were finished." Not promising.

Then, Ben came in and asked me, "Did you mention the animal that's older than the dinosaurs?" Suddenly, the children lit up, stopped what they were doing and raced outside to see this ancient marvel. Ben began his presentation for these two. Others, seeing that something was going on, began trickling in. For the next hour and a half, students from kindergarten to 12th grade came out to see, handle, flip over and learn about these animals and their aquatic ecosystems. From the Matrix-esque acrobatics of the turning sea star, to the stolen abode of the hermit crab, they were enthralled, and every one of them got to hold an animal that's older than the dinosaurs.

a group of third graders. After a day of direct service, it was always easy to go home and feel satisfied. Learning to see the accomplishments in my VISTA service took a whole different mindset.

Certainly, I did have some tangible accomplishments. Over the course of my year, I developed a series of electronic newsletters and a website. I co-planned a training that brought youth and adults together to learn about service learning and the life and mission of civil rights leader, Cesar Chavez. I collected and disseminated more resources than I can count.

Mostly, I learned the value in building foundations. As VISTA members, we are called Change Agents and Capacity Builders. One year is a mighty short time, I realized, to cause any great change or build real capacity. We do have an incredible opportunity, though, and that is to build (or build on) a foundation for community change.

"A cathedral cannot be completed in one lifetime; still, architects, builders, and designers throughout time have devoted their lives to a project that they will not see finished."

Our former FASS VISTA Director, Ericka Zdenek, lent
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me a book early in my VISTA term, Bill Shore's The Cathedral Within. (This really ought to be required reading for every VISTA!) Through the community stories and individual profiles, Shore draws on the metaphor of building a cathedral. A cathedral cannot be completed in one lifetime, he ascertains; still, architects, builders, and designers throughout time have devoted their lives to a project that they will not see finished. It is this concept that brought me through my term of service, and that I will continue to reflect on as I serve in other capacities. I may never see the results, but I trust the process. I trust that the cathedral will be built, even if I only lay part of the foundation, or design one window pane. I trust that

my one year of service, combined with the energy and determination of other architects and builders, can – and will – eradicate poverty.

The challenge of indirect service continues to be a unique call. There are days when it's still hard to connect the dots. There's nothing glamorous about this choice. Still, someone has to harvest the stone and stir the mortar. Without that harvest, without the foundation, the buttresses, the stained glass windows, and the pews lining the marble floors, there would be no cathedral. I've learned that, long after I'm gone, my small and often intangible accomplishments will be part of a great cathedral.

And I just never expected that.

VISTA Vine, Part II

Kim Tabah
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Volunteer Leon



Volunteers and Seniors: Helping Each Other

Youth of the Big Bend area are concerned with intergenerational issues and are dedicated to assisting Florida seniors with making their homes safer. VolunteerLEON Youth Corps will aid seniors in preparing for the upcoming 2005 hurricane season, through their Home Safety and Disaster Preparedness for Seniors program. More than 300 seniors will be impacted during the program's implementation (January through May 2005). Prior to working on the program, VolunteerLEON Youth Corps members attended an interactive Aging Sensitivity Training Course in order to better understand many of the challenges faced by seniors.

Targeted seniors for the Home Safety and Disaster Preparedness program are clients of Elder Care Services of the Big Bend whose homes are not well equipped with needed home safety and disaster preparedness materials. On February 21st, Youth

Corps members visited the homes of more than 300 seniors to distribute Meals on Wheels with the Elder Care Services volunteers. In addition to meals, they also distributed disaster preparedness informational packets donated by the American Red Cross. The packets serve to further educate the seniors on safety precautions that should be taken in case of a hurricane or an emergency. Because of the horrible hurricane season in 2004, the youth want to make sure that senior citizens are properly prepared for hurricane season this year. The youth also distributed home safety packets containing information on the Florida Injury Prevention Program for Seniors (FLIPS), and Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders (SHINE) pamphlets and handouts. These informational packets will provide the seniors with much needed resources in order to make sure that their homes are safe.

Seniors were asked to complete a short questionnaire, return it to Elder Care Services of the Big Bend, and then in March, Youth Corps members along with Elder Care Services case managers will determine 75 homes most in need of assistance. In May 2005, the youth will return to the 75 homes to distribute home safety items, such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, first-aid kits, flash-



Service - Learners Assist Elders

lights, batteries and light bulbs.

VolunteerLEON Youth Corps is a dedicated group of youth, ages 12-18 in Tallahassee, Florida, who plan, organize and participate in monthly service projects and in local and national days of service. VolunteerLEON Youth Corps is hosting this incredible project in conjunction with the Department of Elder Affairs, Elder Care Services of the Big Bend, the Capital Area American Red Cross, and the Leon County Tax Collector Offices.

If you don't live in the Tallahassee, Florida area, this program is also available through Volunteer Services of Manatee County. If you have any questions regarding VolunteerLEON Youth Corps or this project, contact Kimberley Tabah, Youth Corps Coordinator, at 918 Railroad Ave. Tallahassee, Fl. 32310, or by phone at 850-921-3015.

AmeriCorps: One Year in a Lifetime of Service



The AmeriCorps Alumni Association recently merged with the Hands On Network and sponsored a leadership conference on March 5, 2005 in Portland, OR with alums from across the country. 70 alums representing AmeriCorps State/Direct, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC gathered to discuss ideas of how to strengthen a national AmeriCorps alumni network and engage alums in service.

Alums discussed ideas about what a national network should like and how to best engage alums and current AmeriCorps members in service and in supporting current AmeriCorps and CNCS programs. Coming out of the leadership conference, the network has formed task forces and advisory councils to develop local chapters and the network's overall mission.

During 2005, the network plans to do the following:

- Widely Disseminate a Renewed Mission of the Organization;

- Excite the membership by re-establishing the communication infrastructure and issuing a call to service;
- Cultivate Partners and Champions in the Field to Support the Effort;
- Leverage the Infrastructure of Hands On Network Affiliates and other AmeriCorps Programs to Develop Local Alumni Organizations.

Nationwide Goals for 2005:

- Identify 1000 Alumni Leaders who will be active participants in local chapter activity.
- Enroll 10,000 new alumni members from the classes of 2005.
- Enroll 10,000 new alumni members from pre-2005 classes.
- Engage 2,000 alumni in continued service projects and leadership development opportunities.

The network seeks to promote the idea that "AmeriCorps is one year in a lifetime of service." Look for more information about the AmeriCorps Alums Network in the coming months.



70 Alums gathered in Portland on March 5th discuss the future of the AmeriCorps Alums Network

VISTA View: Mornings with Meaning

My name is Mary Joan Payelle, and I am 71 years old. I have lived in Panama City, Florida since 1972 and I have enjoyed 45 years in a satisfying career as a registered nurse. When I retired in 1996, life changed dramatically. I went from being an active, hard working, and fun loving caregiver to leading an inactive, unsatisfying, lonely life at home. I filled some of the void by traveling back and forth to New Orleans caring for my mother-in-law who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. After her death in 2000, I needed a reason to get out of bed. January of 2001 was another changing point in my life. My daughter moved back from Canada and began a career working in the ESE (Exceptional Student Education) department at Bay High School. I started volunteering,

helping students with reading, math and participation in leisure activities. That's when I realized I had a lot to give, and there were still people willing to listen and learn. The responses I received were overwhelming; I began to feel

Mary Joan Payelle
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Possibilities R Us/Panama City



appreciated, cared for and loved. The whole experience had given me a sense of belonging. After a couple of years I was asked if I would consider working as a sub-teacher. I began to use my brain, which I had not done since I retired. Last fall, I started working full time for PRU and was asked, by a teacher, to

consider a position as a VISTA. After attending the November Learn and Serve conference, I was amazed at what the job involved. I was hoping that VISTA would give me the opportunity to represent them. In January, my wish came true. I flew to Atlanta, Georgia and met a group of people who were a lot like me. They wanted to dedicate at least a year of their lives volunteering to help people in more ways than I had ever dreamed possible. I am proud of my VISTA position and hope to become a vital person in my community. It has been a challenging, worthwhile experience; VISTA has given me opportunity to share of myself with others.

Now, I have a reason to get up every morning.

Service Learning Network Sponsors Teacher In-Service and Summer Day Camp

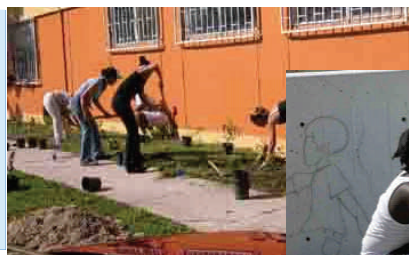
As part of the Service Learning Network, FASS VISTA members in the Tallahassee Area are planning a service learning teacher training and a service learning summer day camp for youth.

The teacher in-service will take place at the Florida Department of Education on June 8, 2005. The training will be based on the Cesar Chavez inspired service-learning philosophy and will provide an overview of how students can learn new skills through service learning. Participants will receive a practical resource packet for integrating service learning into their curricula, standards, and academic goals.

The Service Leadership Ambassador Camp (SLAC) will take place from June 20-24, 2005 at Tallahassee Community College. 100 youth will participate in a fun and hands-on training focusing on teambuilding activities and designing service learning projects. Activities will include a high and low ropes course, visits to local service agencies and participation in local service projects.

For more info, contact:: Kim Tabah 850-921-3015 tabahk@leoncountyfl.gov.

Krista Walker
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Miami Dade
Community College



Mosquitoes In Service To America

Coming from the Midwest, Miami was an extreme change from what I always considered to be normal. Even pictures on the internet would never have prepared me for this experience. Life in Miami is different, but life in Miami VISTA style is even more extreme. I believe that VISTA's come with an expectation of change, but never realize what barriers are before them until they are able to see the big picture. Although I've only been here 9 months, I believe I have a very in depth look at the Miami that people portray to be the one of the nation's Hot Spots. I have had an opportunity to meet so many people that are doing wonderful things and creating change in Miami, but the one thing that I have noticed is that life is so much better when everyone wants to create a better life together. For this to happen, people are really going to have to give of themselves to achieve this goal. I have found that in a place where poverty reigns, there are single individuals all over who are willing to help create change.

The Reeves Park Project was an example where 50 plus people in the community were able to



Volunteers gardening in Miami

come out and make a difference in a nearby park in Overtown. We barbequed, planted trees, the children in the area painted a mural, picked up trash, and people were able to really enjoy themselves. We also had physical therapy students from Miami Dade College come and give developmental screenings to children in the area. (The next semester these students also were able to give developmental screenings for a Head Start Program at Allapattah Child Care Center where they were able to check over 60 children.) Over all I believe that my experience as a VISTA has really been a time for me to learn about life, myself, what I want out of life, and how one person can cause change. So with that said I'll leave Miami with one quote by Anita Roddick that to me will always be true. "If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to sleep in a room with a mosquito."

Annie Cavazuti
AmeriCorps*VISTA
Eckerd College
St. Petersburg

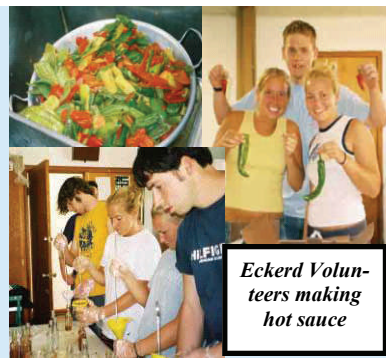


When many people think about spring break, they see sunny beaches

filled with half naked drunken college-aged students. My experience this past spring break was quite different.

Nine students from Eckerd College and myself piled into a twelve passenger van and drove eleven hours from St. Petersburg, Florida to New Orleans to work at a local community garden, "God's Vineyard." This is such a special place, with very hard working people doing good deeds in their community. Earl Antwine started it in 1997. Boys from the neighborhood help in the garden, and work with Earl while he is making

St. Thomas Seven Pepper Hot Sauce, which is the only source of income that this organization has.



Eckerd Volunteers making hot sauce

We got there on a Sunday night and started work Monday at 9:00 am. We cleaned up their food storage pantry, tilled and weeded the garden, fed their chickens and rabbits, fed the homeless that came up to the church to eat, picked up food from Second Harvest,

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325 John Knox Road
Building F, Suite 210
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Phone: (850) 488-9660
Fax: (850) 922-2928
Email: lfikkema@admin.fsu.edu

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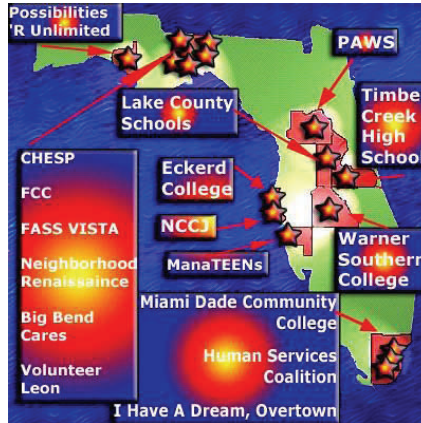
Empowering students through volunteerism and service-learning in order to create positive change in our communities.

Check us out at
www.fsu.edu/~vista

- Warner Southern College
- MDC-I Have a Dream
- Human Services Coalition
- Eckerd College
- Miami-Dade College
- Florida Campus Compact
- Florida CHESP/SPaRC
- Neighborhood Community Renaissance Partnership
- Higher Education Service Learning Project Sites

K - 12 Service Learning Project Sites

- Big Bend Cares
- Bay High School
- ManaTEENS
- Volunteer Leon
- Dunnellon Middle School
- South Lake High School
- Timber Creek High School
- National Conference for Community and Justice



(Continued from page 5)

distributed food to the local community... and we also made their hot sauce. This took the ten of us most of the week to do!

Earl Antwine is pretty much a one-man show. He knows that this hot sauce is his program's only survival, so most days he is up at four in the morning and is working late in the evening. Our group was there from nine in the morning until six in the evening and we were exhausted. This experience opened up many students' eyes and gave them a very different perspective of the struggles that some people have to go through in order to survive. I was asked as soon as I got back on campus if I would turn around right now and go do the whole thing over again. My answer to that was:

"Not until I get some sleep".

Goodbye, VISTAs!

Stephanie Hooks
Tara Cooper
Kelli-Beth Conway
Maureen Bradley

Thank you, and we'll miss you.

Hello, VISTAs!

Taurean Wong
Dawne-Waithe Talbot
Holly Gudaitis
Mary Joan Payelle
Phyllis Henderson

Welcome! We're glad you're with us!

Six months At A Glance

April

- 15 Project Progress Reports Due
- 6-8 Gulf South Summit, Brevard County
- 15 Project Progress Reports Due
- 15-17 National Youth Service Day
- 17-23 National Volunteer Week
- 26-29 Pre-Service Orientation, Atlanta

May

- 7 Join Hands Day
- 20-21 Florida AmeriCorps Conference, Orlando

June

- 3 Applications due for July PSO
- 8 SLN Teacher In-Service, Tallahassee
- 17 Applications due for August PSO
- 20-24 Service Leadership Ambassador Camp,

July

- 15 Project Progress Reports Due
- 19-22 Pre-Service Orientation, Atlanta

August

- 2-5 Pre-Service Orientation, Atlanta
- 4-6 Points of Light/CNCS Conference, Washington, DC

September

- 30 Applications due for November PSO