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## VISTAs get things done in Seattle



*Ericka Zdenek at Mt. Rainer.*

*"When I got off the plane and saw the snow, I knew this was going to be an extraordinary experience."*

*VISTA Dir. Ericka Zdenek*

In March, FASS VISTA Initiative sent eight ambassadors to the 13th annual National Service - Learning Conference (NSLC) in Seattle. FASS VISTA Initiative was selected by the National Youth Leadership Council to present about our innovative VISTA partnership with K-16 service learning programs in Florida. This was the first time that a VISTA program had presented at the national conference.

While at the conference, VISTAs wore many hats. In addition to presenting, VISTAs helped coordinate session evaluations, room set ups, and served as guest speaker liaisons. VISTAs Patty Hendry and Shelba Mann were even recruited as stand-ins for Leslie Lenkowsky, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), and

Shirley Sagwa, a national expert on children and youth policy, for a tree planting ceremony.

When they were not volunteering, the VISTAs had the opportunity to attend workshops and trainings. VISTA Julie Neubauer from Pine Jog Environmental Center stated that "coming into the conference I did not know what I would get out of it, but after the first meeting it became evident how many resources I would gain. The

conference allowed me the opportunity to branch out and learn about others working on environmental issues in Seattle (my home), as well as West Palm Beach."

The area where the VISTAs shined the brightest was during their Friday morning presentation. The room was packed. The VISTAs dazzled attendees with their stories and illustrated the sheer power of a small group of dedicated individuals. Robert Bush, a policy specialist with CNCS, was there. He personally thanked each VISTA for their service.



*VISTAs: Shelba Mann, Patty Hendry, and Drew Teague.*

*Footnote: As a result of attending the NSLC, State Farm's regional headquarters in Florida contacted us to see how they can assist us in promoting service learning.*

**Special points of interest:**



Vista Leader Jean Kern was awarded a scholarship to attend the National Conference in Salt Lake City.

## A Stroll Through Pike's Place Market, Seattle WA



## Visioning the Future

VISTA service is a phenomenal experience in growth.

- It is a demonstration of the personal growth of the volunteer coming face to face with how poverty looks, feels, and tastes.
- It is the growth of an interconnectedness between community, school, organization and people to realize and actualize their hopes and dreams for change.



- Lakeisha Dorsey
- Leandra Medina
- Kathy Kirley
- Anthony Kurdziel
- Alisha Moody
- Rachel Landry

Finally, I welcome our new change agents who have brought new skills and passion to continue the vision. Good Luck!

VISTA truly provides everyone the opportunity to nurture their vision of the future.

This process transforms all who are involved. It may not be immediate, but the power of change and opportunity lasts. I want to take a moment and thank a few dedicated individuals.

My first list recognizes VISTAs who have completed their service over the past five months. Your impact is still being felt.

- Elizabeth Stephenson
- Amber Curtis
- Krista Kuncir
- Julie Neubauer
- Stephanie Ramsey
- Brittany McLaughlin



## “Empty Bowls” lead to community action

“Well, after 30 years of feeling one way, I’m about to change my mind. Something needs to be done for these individuals.”

This was a quote from a participant at the first annual “Empty Bowl” project held April 4th, 2002 in the Bay High School cafeteria.

This remark is typical of the changed perceptions since the project. The community is beginning to take positive actions to address hunger and homelessness.

VISTAs from two National Service-Learning Leader Schools and Bay District Schools helped coordinate and direct the project that consisted of a community soup supper with soup donated by local restaurants, a stu-

dent-led community forum on hunger and homelessness, and the sale of hundreds of beautiful handcrafted ceramic bowls made by elementary students with assistance from their art teachers and their Learn & Serve high school mentors. Over 450 students actively confronted the issues of hunger and homelessness through this project.

If you are interested in replicating this project, please contact Evelyn Robinson at [robinsons@lake.k12.fl.us](mailto:robinsons@lake.k12.fl.us) for the project outline. Rutherford High School also has a video of the forum. Contact Beverly Fraser at [frasebm@mail.bay.k12.fl.us](mailto:frasebm@mail.bay.k12.fl.us) for loan information.

## The Power of Youth

*I wanted to volunteer at the Humane Society and they kept telling me “no” that I was too young to help. So I decided to think of a different way that I could help. So, I passed out flyers asking people to give us their “junk” and I would sell it at our garage sale and give all the money to the Halifax Humane Society. I raised over \$370! .. they asked me to be a Change for Change ambassador at my school. The lesson I learned was that even if someone tells you no, you can always find another way.*

*Zachary Graff (Lawton Chiles Grand Prize Winner)*

Zachary’s words illustrate the power of service learning and its ability to create leaders and a commitment to change.

Zachary, along with Ed O’Neil, Elizabeth Raferty, and Falesha McKnight were winners of Florida Learn & Serve’s Lawton Chiles’ Youth Service-Learning Award. They were recognized on March 13, 2002 in Tallahassee by Governor Jeb Bush and Mrs. Lawton Chiles.

Special thanks to VISTA Drew Teague who coordinated the event.



## Defining Service Learning- a question

*Excerpt from e-mail dialogue between Josh Young, Miami-Dade Community College's Director of the Center for Community Involvement, and Joe Follman, Director of Florida Learn & Serve.*

**Josh:** Having been immersed in higher ed. service-learning for so long, I know that one of our biggest challenges is defining service-learning as an academically rigorous teaching/learning strategy that is directly tied to academic courses. In higher ed., from my perspective, we work very hard to stay away from the words "volunteerism" and "community service" when talking about service-learning, and we try to avoid anything that would confuse our faculty regarding what service-learning is and isn't. I'm very uninformed about K-12 service-learning, except that I think the term is used much more loosely and from my perspective, I find that problematic.

I know I'm a purist and from the higher ed. side of this, but I worry about the impact on higher ed. if service-learning is a term used to vaguely refer to practically any type of service experience. I've had K-12 people tell me that any kind of service is "service-learning" because the youth "learn so much." I'm curious what you think about the loose definitions out there and if anyone in K-12 is advocating for a definition that includes the curricular connection, or what the literature says about this?

**Joe:** The point you raise is a major question that is also debated in K-12. Based on my experience and observations, I believe very strongly that there are (at least) two brands of service learning--curriculum-based and non-curriculum-based. We focus on the elements of effective service learning and fidelity to them as defining whether or not activities are service learning. They must integrate the elements of preparation, action,

What do you think about the various definitions of service learning that are out there?

demonstration, and reflection to be considered service learning.

In a school-based context, these elements are played out as an expression of curricular objectives and application of standards. The service is an application and means of learning, and the students practice what they need to know and be able to do through the service. It is worth noting that the teachers almost all say that the affective impacts are at least as powerful as the academic ones.

The ManaTEENs are an excellent example of community-based service learning, and their upcoming summer retreat in June is instructive. Students brainstormed the idea, helped draft the proposal, designed the training, made arrangements for the site, put together the

budget, arranged for food delivery, set up several service projects that will occur, designed the outstanding brochure, are doing an information campaign to advertise the retreat, and will be in charge of putting on the retreat. I challenge anyone who would claim this is not service learning--for that matter not outstanding service learning. But it has no link to curricula at all.

This project and many others fully integrate the elements of service learning. For academics, we do need to stress ties to curricula. When I talk to teachers, I stress curriculum-based service learning and the service-learning elements because curricula is what teachers have to deliver and service learning is a tool to help them do that more effectively. When I train CBO folks, I stress the elements and designing projects that meeting needs of the CBO, the students, and the CBO's client's/community.

To me there is no contradiction, just different flavors.

### Kids-in-Kulture

On Friday April 12, 2002, the Kids-n-Kulture Program at the University of Miami hosted 130 fourth graders from the Little River Elementary School. The day was filled with activities that reinforced the concepts of higher education that UM volunteers and their Vista program supervisor, Sameer Rao, had been teaching the children in the weeks prior to the campus visit.

During the last six weeks, UM volunteers had taught fourth graders a curriculum that not only emphasizes the value of obtaining a college degree, but also how to obtain a college

education. Lessons included the differences between colleges and universities, 2-year schools versus 4-year schools, managing student life, and financial aid.

When the kids were on campus, they experienced a chemistry class visit, cultural dancing, dormitory tours, and a career center visit. 140 UM students volunteered to make the day a success. Most importantly, the Kids-n-Kulture program was able to tangibly demonstrate to the kids the concepts and ideas that taught in the classroom. UM and Little River Elementary school are committed to continue their partnership.

# A Few More Tools for Your Toolbox



## VISTA SUPERVISORS' TOP 10 IDEAS LISTS

### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Saul and FCC for grant ideas.
- Jean will forward grant opportunities that come across her desk.
- Work-study monies. Connect with civic groups and clubs; Kiwanis is one that focuses on kids, for example).
- Don't throw anything away: bartering is good!
- Use sports and arts events as a way for volunteers to connect with 'at risk' populations.
- Find a product your organiza-

tion can trade for.

- Let others know what you need!
- Network with each other- email, phone, etc.
- Don't reinvent the wheel.
- Write curriculum to replicate what you are doing.
- Utilize your participants to tell your 'story' and train others

### MEDIA MARKETING

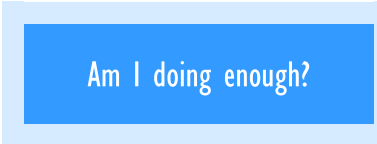
- Family Orientation night. Explain what you do, how you do it, and how it benefits everyone involved.
- Teacher Orientation, Student Body Orientation, and a Community Leaders' Orientation.

- Power points: Present your 'story' to various organizations in the community.
- Brochures.
- Invite stakeholders to your project so that they can see your 'story' in action.
- TV Spotlight: Local school system & colleges have a TV stations
- T-shirts.
- Use a student for PR.
- Make close contacts with assignment editors of local TV and newspaper outlets.
- Keep marketing as a permanent part of staff meeting agenda so it actually happens.

## Jean's Tracking Trick

Writing my second Quarterly Project Progress Report made me ask constantly, "Am I doing enough?"

In order to put peace of mind back into my space with a secure, measured feeling of "YES, I am doing enough," and the enough I am doing is appropriate, I decided to use a DayMinder Teacher Planner published by the Mead Corporation. The seven period spaces down the left hand side of the page have been converted to



my Work Plan Goals and Objectives. I photo copied the page as it is set up with periods. I added a goal from the work plan to each period space and made a dozen copies of this page. I taped them into the planner, one per week in such a way that these photo copied goal sheets act as an envelope for me to collect samples and examples of quality of the week's efforts. I chronicle daily in headline form what tasks I accomplish in the

space under the appropriate day across from the corresponding task.

This approach is also helping me to write truly rich word sketches that capture the essence and spirit of the tasks that are listed in quantifiable terms in Column C of the Project Work Plan. This method might also be useful to you if you start it now. Remember Ericka needs your Project Progress Report on October 15, 2002.

Contact Jean Kern via email at [jkern@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:jkern@admin.fsu.edu) for a sample.

## When have I experienced working for the common good?

*When we work for the common good, we experience each other in new ways. We don't worry about differences, or status, or traditional power relationships. We worry about whether we'll succeed in accomplishing what needs to be done. We focus on the work, not on each other. We learn what trust is. We learn the necessity of good communication.*

*These are always the conditions that bring out our best— we're focused on something we really care about; we work intensely*

*together, inventing solutions as needed; we take all kinds of risks; we communicate constantly.*

*Margaret Wheatley (author)*

I have been reading this fascinating book called "turning to one another: simple conversations to restore hope to the future" by Margaret Wheatley. I took this excerpt out of this book to start a conver-

sation. The question posed in the title of this article is a question that resounds in the work each of you do every day. VISTAs, VISTA supervisors, service-learning students, community partners, etc. Each bring a different piece to the puzzle which we hope will result in the common good for our society. What makes what we do so important?

# Resources through relationships

"You'll miss 100% of the goals you don't shoot for." This wisdom from hockey great Wayne Gretsky is certainly true in life, but also in the sometimes intimidating world of soliciting donations. And you'd be surprised how willing people are to support your efforts if they truly understand their part in the big picture of your mission.

For an event last month for my project here in Tallahassee, I needed to find six hotel rooms for guests coming into town. Working with an already tight budget, there was no way I could pay for them, and so decided to see if I could get at the very least a reduced rate somewhere. Over the next week, I contacted all the hotels in the area of the State Capitol, where the event was to take place, and found that at the very minimum it would cost me \$520. There was just no way. What was I to do? I couldn't call off the event, or ask our guests to stay home, so I just had to get the rooms donated. And I did. They key to my success was in developing a relationship with the sales manager at one particular hotel. It was a fine hotel, close to the Capitol, and they had been willing to give me a generous rate reduction over the phone, so I knew they would be willing to negotiate further.

The next day I sent a letter on agency letterhead to the hotel sales manager that was simply an introduction to what my project does here in Tallahassee, and included a current newsletter. I made no requests. I just wanted her to know who we

were when I went to meet with her the next week. A few days later I went to the hotel and asked to speak to the Sales Manager. She was very nice, and remembered my agency. She even asked how a particular project we had highlighted in our newsletter was going. After a few moments of conversation, I explained that the reason for my visit was to introduce myself personally to her, and to explore what kind of accommodations the hotel has for conferences and meetings. I explained that my project conducts many such events and is always looking for space. We toured the facilities and continued to talk about what my project does, and how it impacts the community we share. As we concluded, I asked if she



VISTA Andrew Teague (at right) author of story.

would mind if I put her hotel on our community newsletter list, to keep them updated on our progress. She was happy to oblige. Armed with lots of infor-

mation I thanked her and said good-bye, again having made no requests for a donation.

About a week later, I sent her a copy of a press release that I had made describing the event planned at the State Capitol with Governor Bush. It further described my project, and gave the sales manager a better idea of how we operate and who we interact with in order to accom-

plish project goals. She called me later that day. Again we had a nice conversation about the event, and she asked if there

was anything that the hotel could do for us. I told her that I needed six hotel rooms for guests coming to see the Governor, and that cost was an issue. We

negotiated a few minutes and she offered an extremely low per-room rate. I thanked her for her generosity, and simply said that I would check with my agency, and get back to her. But I then knew that she both had the power and the inclination to go further. The next day I went in to see her in person. I brought a copy of the event program, and we discussed putting the hotel in it and thanking them publicly for their support. She was very pleased with the exposure the hotel was going to get because of our event. It was then that I asked if perhaps she would be willing to donate the rooms as a demonstration of partnership. I offered to raise the level of recognition further if she did. She went to speak to the hotel manager and in a few minutes she returned with an answer. Yes. They would do it. And they did it because of a relationship was cultivated that would result in mutual benefit. Of course, now whenever we have a local event, I go to her first. And I also will keep her on my mailing list, sending her regular newsletters and updates.

**"The key to my success was in developing a relationship..."**



345 S. Magnolia Drive, Ste. D-12  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

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

## FASS VISTA INITIATIVE

*To empower students through volunteerism  
and service-learning to create positive  
change in schools and communities*

Check us out at  
[www.fsu.edu/~vista](http://www.fsu.edu/~vista)

Current FASS VISTA Initiative Sites:

### Higher Education Civic Engagement Programs

Jacksonville University	Florida Gulf Coast University
University of Florida	Ringling School of Art & Design
Miami-Dade Community College	Brevard Community College
University of Miami	

### K-12 Service-Learning Programs

Pine Jog Environmental Center	Florida Learn & Serve
Hippodrome State Theater	Bay District Schools
Bay High School	Rutherford High School
Miami-Dade Public Schools	Taylor County High School
South Lake High School	

*Thanks to all our host sites and project supervisors for their partnership  
and commitment!*

## Six months At A Glance

FASS VISTA has sent out their six-month calendars to keep you updated on important dates. We hope you enjoy! Here is a quick look at what is to come.

### May

7-9 Early Service Training in Atlanta  
17 Learn & Serve applications due.  
20-21 Service Leadership Florida Institute (Clearwater)  
31st New VISTA applications due to FASS VISTA for the July PSO.

### June

6 VISTA application due to CNS  
15-17 ManaTEENS Community-Based Service Learning Retreat in Bradenton, FL.  
17-18 Learn & Serve's Natural Areas Management Training in Orlando, FL.  
17-18 Character Education Conference in Orlando

### July

3 VISTA applications due to FASS for approval.  
9-11 EST in Orlando.  
10 VISTA applications due for August PSO  
16-19 PSO in Orlando

### August

7-9 In-Service Training in Gainesville  
20-23 PSO in Atlanta

### September

1 Submit update work plans for FASS VISTA grant renewal

### October

15 Project Progress Report due covering 1/02-9/02  
22-24 EST in Atlanta  
24-26 EST in Tuskegee