

FASS VISTA Initiative

VISTA VISION

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Evolution of VISTA	2
Possibilities	2
Change Agent	3
South Lake	3
Toolbox	4
Beating the Cat	5
5 mo. Glance	6

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Mary Griffith, Volunteer Florida!; Saul Magana, Florida Campus Compact; Joe Follman, Florida Learn & Serve; Todd Livingston, Dignity Project; Jean Kern, VISTA Leader; Krista Kuncir, FGCU VISTA; Erin DeAnnuntis, South Lake VISTA; Bill Moeller, Florida State University; Bonnie Harrison, Hippodrome State Theater; Colette Taylor, University of Florida; Amber Curtis, host VISTA; UF volunteer van drivers; and all FASS VISTAs for a great IST!

Special Point of Interest:



Thank you to South Lake and Bay High School for donating "Empty Bowls" as appreciation gifts for our IST presenters.

Walking the Road of Change

From August 7-9, VISTAs from across Florida participated in FASS VISTA Initiative's Second Annual In-Service Training. This year's training was hosted by the Office of Community Service at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The stage had been set for 3 days of intense exploration into community change.

Day One: VISTAs tackled the world of Media. Imagine a camera in your face and a reporter with a microphone asking..."Can you tell me a little bit about your program?" The adventure was only beginning. Later in the evening, a local change agent Todd Livingston gave a talk on what it takes to be successful in meeting community needs. (See article below.)

Day Two: After hearing Todd Livingston, we had to see his dream and passion in action. VISTAs donned their shirts and hats and visited the Dignity Project. As part of our tour, the Initiative helped detail three cars to prepare them for donation to local community members in need. In the afternoon, we explored grant writing and had a healthy debate on creating youth empowerment and civic engagement. We spiced up the night with complimentary tickets to a theater



Dorothy (Ericka Zdenek) from the Wizard of Oz took VISTAs on a journey down the yellow brick

production of Honky Tonk Angels.

Day Three: VISTAs discovered the importance of partnerships and a road map to community transformations.

In the words of Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, "Change is just over the rainbow. Keep dreaming." I know 15 VISTAs who are going to blaze the trail to a brighter future.

Todd Livingston: A True Social Entrepreneur



Todd Livingston of the Dignity Project.

When planning the IST, one major goal was to share a passion for change. We could think of no better representative of grass root community development than Todd Livingston.

Todd is a co-founder of the Dignity Project, Inc. This program works with 35-45 at-risk teenage males ages 13-18 in their Automotive and Construction Academy. Program participants are provided with job skills training in automotive mechanics or construction along with GED preparation. The unique aspect of this project is that the products of participant's work go directly back

into the community via donated cars, free automobile repairs, and remodeled and new homes.

Todd joined us on our first evening in Gainesville to give us an insider's look at what it means to be a "social entrepreneur". In Todd's mind, there are nine integral steps into creating change. Those steps are 1) Observe problems in the community. 2) Dream. 3) Take time to perfect and reflect before taking another step. 4) Plan out thoroughly. 5) Do a reality check. 6) Get started. 7) Network. 8) Don't overstate: understate and over deliver. 9) Keep going. These steps gave a practitioner's view of what it takes to have a successful local change movement. VISTAs found Todd's down to earth approach easily transferable to the work they are doing around the state. To put it simply, Todd was inspiring!

The Evolution of VISTA

FASS VISTA Initiative continues to experience positive growth in its first two year. Several projects across Florida have witnessed the power and potential that is afforded them through an AmeriCorps* VISTA volunteer. The dynamic process of inspiring others to become agents of change in their community has resulted in more students reading successfully, a stronger bond of understanding through generations, a sense of environmental stewardship, youth empowerment, plus more. Florida's communities and schools are seeing the positive effects of student/ community engagement.



Shelba Mann
Patty Hendry
Taylor County H.S.
Hippodrome Theater
Christine Ryan
Sameer Rao

FASS VISTA would like to recognize some of the individuals that have dedicated a year to connecting students and communities through service learning. The following group reflects VISTAs and projects who have recently ended their service. Thanks to all of you for great memories and sustainable results.

With the departure of these fabulous individuals and programs, we also welcome new dreamers and visionaries.

Claire Archer	Catherine Murphy
Sue Baldwin	VolunteerLeon
CHESP	Community Renaissance Partnership

VISTA opens the potential of individuals and communities. If you are interested in applying to be a VISTA or new project site, please contact Ericka Zdenek at ezdenek@admin.fsu.edu. We look forward to new collaborations to help Florida's schools and communities meet their needs.

Possibilities 'R Unlimited



"Deep within man dwell those slumbering powers; powers that would astonish him, that he never dreamed of possessing; forces that would revolutionize his life if aroused and put into action.

-O.S. Marden



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At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, Bay High School in Panama City embarked on an innovative approach to increase "independent living" skills for their students with disabilities. Bay County, like other parts of Florida, was facing a dire situation where the needs of people with disabilities were being unmet due to high case loads of Developmental Service case managers and lack of community-based services. To meet the need of young adults, Bay High created Possibilities 'R Unlimited, a Day Training and Not-for-Profit Business Program.

Currently, the program reaches nine students. Over 30 volunteers give time to help program participants work on basic skills such as handling money, measuring, following directions, etc. During daily sessions, the students produce different products like beaded jewelry, handmade

pers, recycled crayons, and ceramics. All of these items will be sold at their store/resource center near the high school.

Possibilities 'R Unlimited has received overwhelming support from the community. The resource center building was donated by the City. Bay County's teen Youth Board awarded the project \$1,000 to support their initiative. In a recent yard sale of donated and student hand-crafted items, the program also raised close to \$500. Bay High is truly leading the way to helping young adults with disabilities live fuller and richer lives and educating the County on an untapped resource.

For more information, contact Cynthia McCauley at mccauley5@aol.com.

Change Agent: Pure Verb- No Noun Intended

Some of my thoughts, coming away from the recent VISTA Service Learning IST in Gainesville, focus on birds and Visarjana's observation, "Birds teach me that everything belongs to everybody." Without birds, how much longer would it have taken man to develop the idea of flight? Who gets credit for "flight"? It is within the context of this idea that I sent a copy of my latest performance review to my mother in the form of a love letter. My achievements are her achievements.

VISTAs are Change Agents in bird-like format, giving nameless wings, selflessly, to helping others achieve their dreams; participating in change benefiting future generations as the rent we pay for the privilege of living here.

Change begins with me. Lindan Johnson, mentor on "How to Change the World" at June's National Conference for Volunteerism in Salt Lake City said, "Change begins in your 'In Box'."

Gandhi's words, "You need to be the change you want to see." continue to mantra my "Change Agent Walk-About". Love and trust replace fear as my energy cornerstone. I am being, seeing and treating the world as a

friend. I know each life circumstance, especially the difficult ones, has a gift-lesson in it for me.

Change is not a competition.
Change is a collaboration.

I participate in a purer form in the bigger pic-

ture of change when I wear a "bird-ego" mantle and concentrate on manifesting ideas and dreams; when I am not concerned with carving my name into the change that is occurring.

Change is not a competition. Change is a collaboration. Everything belongs to everybody!

VISTA is a journey. Travel Safe. Journey Well. I love it when our paths cross.

VISTA Leader Jean Kern

Snapshots of South Lake



During a recent site visit to South Lake High School's Eagle Serve program, we gained a glimpse of the good work that has been completed by these service learning students. In this past year, students have devoted 45,000 service hours to their community through building parks, painting murals, tutoring, and youth empowerment workshops. Their drive and dedication in part is due to their teacher Evelyn Robinson. As a result of the service learning ambitions of Ms. Robinson and her students, Lake County was awarded a Florida Learn & Serve district coordinator position to expand service learning across the entire district.. It will be exciting to see what the next year brings for Lake County schools and students. Good luck!

A Few More Tools for Your Toolbox



Words of Wisdom for AmeriCorps *VISTAs

Cup O Noodles sells for 2 for \$0.99!
Save money by renting a movie with 4 friends and watching it at home
Stay in touch with friends though instant messengers and e-mail instead of expensive long distance phone calls
Visit home as often as possible... there is nothing like having your family cook for you and guess what...its free!
Take time out to just breathe
Reward yourself with a small present at least once a week

Volunteer whenever you can... helping other people makes you feel great!
Laugh Often
Hang out with the people you work with
Communicate your problems
Praise fellow co-workers for a job well done
Surround yourself with positive people
Decorate your bedroom with pictures of love ones
Keep a journal
Write poetry
BE YOURSELF!
Always find humor in any situation
Bake cookies and share
Never argue with co-workers....it'll

get you nowhere and you still have to see them everyday
Surround yourself with positive people
Buy coffee for your boss at least once a month
Master the art of a firm handshake
Speak up at meetings
Assume you can do anything
Find a favorite spot and go there to relax and meditate
Write letters...everyone loves to receive mail
Send thinking of you cards to your family and friends with pictures of your life in your new place.

Christine Rumbaugh, 2nd year VISTA at Miami-Dade Community

When will 250 plastic grocery sacks earn you \$50?



The beach-goer sized bags-ket pictured here brought \$50 at a recent VISTA organized charity yard sale in Panama City to benefit Cynthia McCauley's Possibilities 'R Unlimited project.

Over the past nine months VISTA Leader Jean Kern has experimented with weaving braided plastic grocery sacks, creating a variety of containers and "bags-kets". Visioning plastic grocery sacks as the 21st century's rags came about during her early VISTA adventure in poverty when she needed a bathroom wastebasket. Her creations are reminiscent of the braided rag items prevalent in her grandmother's North Dakota farmhouse sixty years ago.

She has begun to present the idea at environmental fairs and a Service Learning Arts Conference. Jean wants Art teachers across the globe to see plastic grocery sacks as a free, unending

resource to:

- Fundraise
- Explore art forms indigenous to all early cultures
- Teach braiding and weaving.
- Learn about a typically American pioneer household item
- Help save the Earth!!!

Jean said, "I want to infect this planet's population with ideas for recycling plastic bags into usable products." If you are interested in more information about the "bags-kets", contact Jean Kern at jkern@admin.fsu.edu.

Need Inspiration?

When starting a change initiative, people instinctively seek out wisdom and guidance from others who have traveled the same road that they are embarking on. This can happen through talking with neighbors, national or local conferences, consulting firms, or the internet. The resources and information can be endless and overwhelming.

Jean and I have discovered a few

books that definitely speak to the vision and passion of VISTA and our local project's dreams for the future. We share them with you in hopes that they inspire and unlock doors for new ways to move to the next level.

Margaret Wheatley, *turning to one another: simple conversations to restore hope to the future.*

Bill Shore, *The Cathedral Within.*

Peter Block, *The Answer to How is Yes.*

Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within.*

Sue Vineyard, *Recognizing Volunteers & Paid Staff: The Art, The Science & a Gazillion Ideas.*

Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership.*

Happy Reading!

Beating the CAT- the FCAT That is



The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is notoriously known among elementary school administration, teachers, and students as a time of stress to "make the grade." Many schools have limited resources when it comes to reinforcing the skills students need to score higher on the upcoming year's test.

Cambridge Elementary was one of those schools – one trying hard to improve scores. VISTA Julia Doherty met with Cambridge's Principal, Kay Brown, one afternoon with the task in mind of simply introducing herself as the new FASS VISTA kid on the block. What resulted from that meeting was a successful project involving 350 children, 40 volunteer tutors, and most importantly, a 10% increase in scores on the 2002 FCAT!

At the initial meeting, Principal Brown indicated to Julia that it sure could help if some type of remediation could be given to children grades 3-6 in research and reference skills: dictionary, encyclopedia, Atlas, index, and table of contents. The previous year's FCAT scores in this area indicated a marked deficit in these crucial building block skills.

Julia left the meeting thinking, "Gee, I don't even know if this is an America Reads project," and, "What will my site supervisor think?"

With much support from her site supervisor, Julia developed the following project to quickly review and teach research and reference skills to the entire 3-6th grade population of Cambridge Elementary in the 8 weeks remaining before the FCAT.



FCAT tutoring session at Brevard Community College.

Using the resource of Brevard Community College (BCC) service-learning volunteers and Employee Service Project (ESP) volunteers, 25 students were tutored at each session using group teaching techniques.

"With the 3rd and 4th graders, we went to Cambridge. We went into the classrooms each armed with a dictionary or two and a couple of encyclopedia volumes; eventually the kids began to identify us whenever we were on campus as The Dictionary People," Julia said.



Principal Brown wanted to expose the older students to their local community college campus somehow to reinforce the concept that BCC is

YOUR community college. So, a group of 5th and 6th graders were brought each week to the Brevard Community College/University of Central Florida Joint Use Library for tutoring sessions in a large library conference room. Many of the students had never been in a library other than their school's media center before and were amazed that the college library was bigger than their entire school!

The result? The high points are listed below:

- 10% increase in skills in the research and reference area on the 2002 FCAT
- College students and employees were partnered with the elementary school in a meaningful way. The BCC service-learners, many of whom were elementary education majors, gained experience in a cooperative education (group tutoring) experience and got to experience the inside of teacher's classrooms. The Cambridge students were exposed to a college campus for the first time and met a diverse group of community volunteers.
- The cost was minimal to nothing!

In conclusion, this simple project was the catalyst for the BCC Florida Future Educators Association in "adopting" Cambridge Elementary as their partnership school. The FFEA club, hosting wildly successful spaghetti luncheons on campus, raised over \$1000.00 for research and reference materials in Spring 2002. The check was presented to a surprised and delighted Principal Brown.

More projects are being planned for the following school year.



Principal Kay Brown and VISTA Julia Doherty celebrating a successful partnership.



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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

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
CHESP	Community Renaissance Partnership

K-12 Service-Learning Programs

Pine Jog Environmental Center	Florida Learn & Serve
Bay High School	Volunteer Leon
Miami-Dade Public Schools	South Lake High School
Bay District Schools	

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

Five months At A Glance

October

4	VISTA Applications due for November PSO
7	New Project VISTA Applications due
16-18	Service Leadership Florida in Orlando
21	Project Progress Report due covering 1/02-9/02
26	Make A Difference Day

November

11	Veteran's Day
15	3rd month PPR Due for VISTAs attended PSO in July.
18-20	Florida Service Learning Institute in Orlando
28	Thanksgiving
19-22	Pre-Service Orientation

December

1	VISTA applications due to for January PSO.
15	3rd mo. PPR due for VISTAs who attended PSO in August.
25	Christmas

January

1	Happy New Year!
TBA	Pre-Service Orientation
15	PPR due for 1st year programs

February

TBA	February Regional Supervisor Trainings
20-21	Gulf South Summit in Long Beach, MI
20-22	Student Civic Engagement Week at MDCC in Miami