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Individual Highlights:

- Students Prep for Disasters 2
- Matt Whitman reflects on two years in AmeriCorps 3
- Upcoming Events 4

President's Higher
Education Community
Service Honor Roll
Member With
Distinction



Carnegie Foundation
Elective Classification in
Community Engagement



AmeriCorps Success Stories

All AmeriCorps members promise that they “will get things done for America to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.” Members of the SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps program have certainly been getting things done in the community over the last five years. Serving at more than twenty agencies in the Cortland community over the life of the program, members provide an invaluable resource for their host agencies by developing and running programs, serving clients, and providing general support to their agencies. Each AmeriCorps member brings a unique set of skills and experiences to the agencies where they serve, and they are generating excellent results. At a recent training, members took some time to think about success stories from their service.

The following examples are just a few of the many success stories highlighting the accomplishments of the SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps members that show they are fulfilling their oath of “getting things done.”

Dana Burke, at the Cortland Soil & Water Conservation District, helped organize this year’s River Clean-Up. During the clean-up, 120 people participated, and they disposed of almost 2,000 pounds of trash, and 350 pounds of scrap metal. Groups that participated included: 4-H clubs, civic organizations, AmeriCorps members, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, high school clubs, church groups, and individuals.

Devon Darrow, serving at the Cortland YMCA, started an official USTA Tennis program for children 10 and under.

At the Cortland Downtown Partnership, the AmeriCorps member, Nicole LaFreniere, helped plan the Taste of Downtown event. The Cortland Downtown Partnership sold over 700 tickets for the event and brought hundreds of people into the downtown area.

The AmeriCorps member at Seven Valleys Health Coalition, Emma Ignazewski, helped educate 2nd graders in four Cortland County schools on proper dental hygiene and its impact on health as part of the agency’s oral health program.

At the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (IRRC), Sara Olear helped raise \$700 to help build accessible pathways at the Belize Zoo. The fundraiser is a part of an ongoing partnership between the IRRC and the Belize Zoo.

Anthony Vincente, the AmeriCorps member at the Lime Hollow Center for Environment and Culture helped to develop a new program called Coyote’s Edge. As part of the program Anthony goes into classrooms to teach 6th graders about dendrology – the science and study of wooded plants – and how to use the dichotomous key. After teaching the students in the classroom, they go out to Lime Hollow to learn more about identifying trees, how trees are important, and to do some creative writing about trees.

These examples illustrate the difference that AmeriCorps members are making the community and in the lives of individuals they serve.

(Continued on page 2)



AmeriCorps members receiving Mayor's Recognition in April 2013

(Continued from page 1)

Richard Kendrick, Director of the SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps program, said, "Our members have made a significant impact in the community over the last five years of the program; their success stories highlight their impact on agencies, the community, and the individuals they have served."

This year is the 20th anniversary of the AmeriCorps program, and the 5th and final year of the SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps program. Since its inception nationally, more than 820,000 men and women have taken the AmeriCorps pledge, serving more than 1 billion hours and improving the lives of countless Americans. We are proud to be a part of that tradition.

Students Prep for Disasters

Disaster preparedness takes many forms, one of which is making sure that the community can respond quickly and effectively to the rapid spread of diseases. One way of doing so is through vaccination clinics.

Last month, seven SUNY Cortland students volunteered with the Cortland County Health Department to test the operation of Cortland County's "Mass Clinic" vaccination procedures, as part of a Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program.

Cortland County Health Department's Deputy Public Health Director, M. J. Uttech, worked with Professor Aimee Greeley (Health) to recruit seven students.

Uttech was interested in SUNY Cortland students' participation, in part, because the procedure needs people who are familiar and comfortable with computers. Another reason is that college students can be fast-learners, which is an important quality because one of the procedure's requirements is "Just-in-Time Training" for volunteers.

Volunteers receive an overall mission briefing, a safety briefing, and then specific training for the task that they are performing. In this case, SUNY Cortland volunteers registered the "patients" who came to the clinic.

The exercise was a success. Deputy Director Uttech names the procedure's first major strength as SUNY Cortland students' effectiveness as registrars.

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

In an e-mail, she praised the students, writing, “I really can’t overstate how wonderful these students were. They all came in ahead of time to get DOH [NY State Department of Health] access accounts; they showed up on time for the training; they all had very pleasant attitudes, and they were all very proficient at the tasks they were assigned. As one of our staff said, ‘They were a godsend!’”

For actual health emergencies, the Health Department would ask SUNY Cortland

for volunteers, but as DOH observers at the exercise learned, they cannot easily get a DOH account for someone who does not have a NYS driver’s license or ID, so (currently), SUNY Cortland students who are not NY residents would not be able to volunteer in this procedure.

DOH observers said that they would try to find out how this problem can be solved.

The students who participated in this exercise are Lindsey Concra, Kristina Conrad, Glen Forsythe, Alexis Johnson, Ryan McBride, Domenica Nociforo, and Gabrielle Tuccillo.

My AmeriCorps Experience

By Matt Whitman, former SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps member
Project Manager, Cortland Area Communities that Care

Throughout the beginning stages of a person’s life there are two common questions that are asked of young people. The first is, what do you want to be; and the second is, what do you want to do? While I still have not figured out what I want to be when I grow up, I do have an answer to what I want to do. This answer has been shaped, almost entirely by my experience in the AmeriCorps over the last two years. So, what is it that I want to do with my life? I want to help people, build communities, and shape the future. While this may sound ambitious, I think my experience has not only helped me develop the skills and experience necessary to do this, but also the confidence to take on these goals. My AmeriCorps service has prepared me to step into my new role as the Project Manager for Cortland Area Communities that Care.

My journey to this new position and figuring what I want to do with my life started when I graduated from

Binghamton University, State University of New York, with a Bachelor of Arts in History.

When I graduated I was asked the question, what do you want to be? There were generally two options: a teacher or lawyer, and I wanted to be neither.

In the spring semester of my junior year at Binghamton, I volunteered to coach track and field at Chenango Forks High School, which is also the high school I attended. Coaching and watching students excel were very rewarding and led me to pursue further coaching experiences later on. Following college – and with my coaching experience in mind – I started working at the YMCA of Broome County coaching youth sports such as soccer, basketball, and baseball; and spending the summers as a counselor at the youth sports camps. At the YMCA, I also worked in the youth wellness center, instructing youth ages 7-14 on how to exercise properly.

(Continued on page 4)

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(Continued from page 3)

My experience and interest in fitness, health and wellness lead me to my first term of service in AmeriCorps.

I was a member of the Rural Health Service Corps, and served as the Health Promotion Specialist at the Broome County Office for Aging. During my time at the Office for Aging, I was responsible for planning, promoting, and facilitating a year-long healthy living program for seniors called Mission Meltaway. Over 100 seniors participated in this program over the course of the year, and many of them were successful at not only losing weight but also improving their lifestyle habits. As part of my service, I also helped deliver Meals on Wheels to homebound seniors. However, I think the most important aspect of my service at the Office for Aging – for my personal growth – was the development of marketing and promotions skills. I created flyers and brochures, wrote press releases and articles, created a Mission Meltaway newsletter. I updated the Web site, participated in monthly department marketing meetings, and helped create new content for the Senior News – a monthly senior newspaper with a circulation of over 7,000. Doing all of these tasks as part of my service helped me to discover what my talents and strengths were, and played a significant role in my career development.

At the conclusion of my AmeriCorps service at the Office for Aging, I was still interested in serving in a position that matched my interests in marketing and promotions. I joined the SUNY Cortland AmeriCorps program as the Community Outreach Coordinator for the SUNY Cortland Institute for Civic Engagement. It is in this position that I have been truly able to develop as a leader and develop the skills necessary to be successful in my chosen path. As the Outreach Coordinator for the Institute for Civic Engagement I have focused on planning events, marketing and promotions, recruiting and coordinating volunteers, getting students involved both on campus and the local community, and building stronger campus/community partnerships.

Throughout my various experiences with AmeriCorps, volunteer activities, and jobs, I have interacted with a wide array of audiences including small children at the YMCA, senior citizens at the Office for Aging, college students at SUNY Cortland, public representatives, and professionals. These interactions have not only helped me develop as a person, but also highlighted the needs of different groups within a community, and the importance of service to the community. My service has allowed me to develop the professional skills I need to be successful, and develop into a creative and confident leader. My AmeriCorps experience has prepared me for my new position at Cortland Area Communities that Care, but more importantly, AmeriCorps allowed me to find my passion.

Upcoming Events

Tues., Nov 12 at noon in the Colloquium Room – Old Main: Dr. Soumia Boutkhal, “Challenges to Women’s Full Citizenship in Morocco.”

Wed., Nov. 13 at 4:30 p.m. in Moffett Center, Room 2125: Dr. Larbi Touaf, “Democracy and Women’s Rights after the Arab Spring.”

Tues., Nov. 12 through Wed., Nov. 14 – Philanthropy Week events in Corey Union – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tues., Nov 12, and Wed., Nov 13, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Jacobus Lounge, Brockway Hall, “Reflections on Civic Engagement” discussions.