



25th Anniversary
Stories of Service



Stories of Service- University of Louisiana at Lafayette AmeriCorps

A brief history of your program:

The UL Lafayette AmeriCorps program is currently in its 25th year of operation on the University of Louisiana at Lafayette campus.

In 1994, the program was in its first year of operation when the Simcoe Educational Center was established in the Simcoe Housing Development, and it became one of the first service sites that the UL Lafayette AmeriCorps team took on. The program also targeted an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school as the AmeriCorps service sites. The team was comprised of 38 AmeriCorps members who mentored and tutored 2,610 students. The program focused on other areas of service including human needs and environmental projects by donating over 1600 toiletry items to the homeless and conducting 3 neighborhood clean ups. The UL Lafayette AmeriCorps team was recognized for its efforts in the community and received volunteer contribution from faculty and students, and an advisory committee of local community leaders was established and praised the program's first year of success.

Currently, UL Lafayette AmeriCorps is still the only university based AmeriCorps program in the state of Louisiana. Our program continues to serve with Lafayette Parish Schools and after school programs. We have added partnerships with Lafayette Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together Acadiana along with many other non-profit organizations in our community. This year we have partnered with the Office of Sustainability at UL Lafayette where we are helping with recycling and composting efforts at all UL home football games with the Zero Waste initiative.

UL Lafayette AmeriCorps has produced over 900 AmeriCorps Alumni and generated a total of 530,000 community service hours since 1994.

Fun fact or interesting tidbit regarding your program:

Our AmeriCorps program is part of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and is the only university-based AmeriCorps program in the state. All of our members are students at UL Lafayette. The goal of the program is to develop civic responsibility and leadership skills in college students through service.



Stories of Service: Impact Lake Charles

How Your Program Impacts The Community:

Impact Lake Charles AmeriCorps members will provide health and safety programming to students and parents in public schools and other meetings around Lake Charles to raise awareness, skills and create good practices in regards to health and safety education.

Fun fact or interesting tidbit regarding your program:

For MLK DAY, Impact Lake Charles AmeriCorps hosts a Bingo at Abraham's Tent. Abraham's Tent is a food bank that caters to the homeless population. Individuals also can pick up food, and clothing items that are donated from the public. Impact AmeriCorps seeks out donations from the community for Bingo Prizes. These prizes consists of cleaning supplies, personal care items, baby items, and other miscellaneous items.



***Stories of Service: Julie LaFleur
Volunteer Louisiana Commissioner
Executive Director, Food Net
AmeriCorps Alumnus***

How national service impacted you:

I learned that being a good leader means knowing when to step in and knowing when to let things continue as they are when everything is working fine.

I learned that everyone has a voice and some of the strongest and wisest are the softest and not the loudest.

I learned that you can accomplish so much when you work as a team and not as much when you don't and the most important lesson I learned is that you can truly make a difference in your community.

Your best memory from your service:

I was serving with 19 and 20 yr. olds when I was 38 yrs. old and pregnant with my 3rd child and after a few months I was just one of the group members because I did everything that my fellow AmeriCorps workers did.



Stories of Service: Communities In Schools

A brief history of your Program

At Communities In Schools, we work hand in hand with schools, communities and families to surround our students with a caring network of support to help them stay in school and succeed in life. Our staff works with nearly 42,000 volunteers on the ground working in more than 2,200 PreK-12th grade public schools in the most challenged communities in 26 states and the District of Columbia serving 1.3 million young people and their families every year. Communities In Schools established its New Orleans affiliate in 1996. Today we serve 5,000 students in grades PreK-12th across 17 New Orleans public schools

Communities In Schools trains and places highly qualified Site Coordinators and supporting staff directly into schools. Our job is to connect students and their families to basic and critical community resources, tailored to each student's specific needs. By providing students with a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, we create a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start to a healthy future, a path towards marketable skills upon graduation, and a chance to give back to peers and the community. As a result, Communities In Schools has become the nation's largest and most effective dropout prevention organization and the only one proven to both

Our staff consists of highly trained Counselors and Social Workers that work, full-time, inside New Orleans Public Schools. Each "Site Coordinator" remains at one school for the entire school year. Our Site Coordinators are licensed professionals with diverse backgrounds ranging from working in MHR, with homeless populations, specializations in substance abuse, Licensed Registered Play Therapists, and many other specializations. These Site Coordinators provide direct services to students, families, and staff that may include: individual counseling, group counseling, family counseling, crisis interventions, psycho-educational presentations to staff, referrals and case management of the referral process, behavior interventions, behavior plans, resource gathering, school wide interventions and many other services as needed.

A timeline or significant moment in time of the program

Prior to the CIS AmeriCorps program it was difficult to secure the number of graduate students needed to provide services in New Orleans public schools; the AmeriCorps program's values, management, Esprit de Corps, and supervision required under grant guidelines, graduate students are more aware of the opportunity and need in public schools, and secure in the knowledge there will be multiple layers of support and guidance by the Site Coordinators and the AmeriCorps Program Director. CIS AmeriCorps members gain skills as a result of their training and service that will enhance their future employment prospects. Because AmeriCorps members who serve at CIS are graduate students in counseling and social work, their AmeriCorps service experience along with the training provided by CIS helps them develop professionally and obtain the skills needed to be highly effective mental health professionals in the future, especially in school settings

Fun Fact or interesting tidbit regarding your Program

Six past AmeriCorps members that served with CIS became employees as Site Coordinators after their year of service was completed. Ten of the past 30 AmeriCorps members went on to a career in New Orleans public schools after completing their service term. CIS also assisted more than 75% of past members in securing full time professional employment in the field of mental health after their service term.



Stories of Service: *Maggie Conarro, Program Manager*

Serve Louisiana

AmeriCorps Alumnus, Serve Louisiana

How national service impacted you:

In 2012, I served 11 months with Serve Louisiana (then Louisiana Delta Service Corps) as a Youth Garden and Local Food Coordinator for Slow Food Baton Rouge. My year of national service was perhaps the single most influential experience in terms of my career path. I connected with so many realms of my hometown's community that I might not have been exposed to otherwise. I honed transferable skills and built an expansive professional network that has since helped me land great jobs including with the Mayor's Office and with Whole Foods Market. I met a ton of wonderful people who I still consider to be great friends. And while the living stipend certainly made things tight, it was a small and temporary sacrifice that I'd make again for all of the opportunities I've gained from the experience. Plus, I was able to pay off my student loans at the end of the term with the education award.

I jumped on the opportunity to come back as staff at this great organization because I really believe in what the year can do for corps members and in what our corps members can do for our community.”



Stories of Service: Up2Us

A brief history of your program:

Our mission is to engage, train and support sports coaches to transform youth, programs and communities.

In 2010 our organization was founded by Paul Caccamo as the first national service program to identify and train young adults to coach and mentor kids in low-income communities.

A timeline or significant moment in time of the program:

In 2012, our New Orleans office opened and in 2014 we were awarded our first Volunteer Louisiana grant!

Fun fact or interesting tidbit regarding your program:

Since our New Orleans founding in 2012 our coaches have served over 5,000 youth.



Stories of Service: Teach For America

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AMERICORPS PROGRAM:

For 29 years, Teach For America has served over 400,000 students in Louisiana across 20+ parishes in pursuit of providing all children with access to an excellent education. Currently there are over 1,800 AmeriCorps members and alumni serving in communities across Louisiana. In the midst of a national teacher shortage, we are proud to say that over 80% of our members are working in an education field every single day as a teacher, school leader, school counselor, and more. With 90% of our alumni working in roles that are positively impacting our students growing up in low-income communities. Join us today in making an impact in students' lives- www.teachforamerica.org.



***Stories of Service- Lori Halvorson, Managing Director, People and Operations
City Year- Baton Rouge
AmeriCorps Alumnus***

How national service impacted you:

National Service has taught me so many things that I apply in my life every day, including resiliency, commitment, empathy, resourcefulness and gratitude! These values play a role in my personal and professional life every single day.

Your best memory from your service:

From my time with Teach for America, taking my French students to Quebec! It was so exciting to see THEM so excited about learning, growing and expanding their knowledge of the world!



Stories of Service- Serve Louisiana

A brief history of your program:

The roots of Serve Louisiana extend north, to our neighbors in Arkansas. In the early 1990s, Billie Ann Meyers, then the Director of the Arkansas Division of Volunteerism, envisioned a program to address the pervasive social problems of the lower Mississippi River Delta flood plains. She and her team reached out to leaders in Louisiana and Mississippi to bring the Delta Service Corps to their states. And when federal funds became available through the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1991, the Delta Service Corps was officially born.

In 1992, the first Delta Service Corps members were placed with various nonprofit and governmental organizations across the three-state area to help address education, public safety, the environment and human needs. Hundreds of full- and part-time members served in the first few years, many of them senior citizens.

New legislation passed in 1993, enabling the funding of hundreds of national service “AmeriCorps” programs. The first AmeriCorps grants were awarded for the 1994-95 program year, and by January 1995, the Louisiana Delta Service Corps had successfully incorporated as a new nonprofit organization. Over the subsequent years, the three-state model became increasingly decentralized, with each state delivering programs tailored to its own population’s needs and challenges. In 2017, Louisiana Delta Service Corps officially became Serve Louisiana, a new name for our long-standing mission of improving lives across South Louisiana.

Fun fact or interesting tidbit regarding your program:

Serve Louisiana is our states' longest running AmeriCorps program.



Stories of Service- Boys & Girls Club of Acadiana

A brief history of your program:

Boys & Girls Clubs of Acadiana began hosting AmeriCorps members in 2017 and are currently in our third year of having AmeriCorps members serve at our Boys & Girls Club sites. Since 2017 we have had approximately 65 members serve with our organization completing close to 90,000 service hours. AmeriCorps members serve at our sites in Lafayette, Abbeville, New Iberia and Opelousas. They are responsible for implementing and tracking Education and Healthy Futures programs with at-risk youth ages 6-18 both after school and during the summer in which over 500 youth have been impacted

A timeline or significant moment in time of the program:

A significant moment of our very young program was during the spring 2019 term when our group conducted a day of service at Lake Fausse Point State Park. We not only volunteered cleaning and enhancing many areas around the park, but we were also able to have a cookout and relax and get to know each other a bit better.

Fun fact or interesting tidbit regarding your program:

An interesting tidbit is that our organization has actually placed several members who have college degrees, though they could choose higher paying employment, they choose to serve with us for little pay.



Stories of Service- City Year New Orleans

A brief history of your program:

City Year is an education-focused non-profit organization that partners with public schools to keep students in school and on-track to succeed. It was founded in 1988 by Michael Brown and Alan Khazei who felt strongly that young people in service could be a powerful resource for addressing America's most pressing issues. City Year's vision is that one day, the most commonly asked question of a young person will be "Where are you going to do your year of service?" Since its founding, City Year has spread to 27 cities across the U.S with 3 international affiliates.

City Year Louisiana was founded in 2005 in response to Hurricane Katrina. In the beginning, AmeriCorps members focused on disaster relief efforts from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. In 2011, City Year Louisiana split into two sites (Baton Rouge and New Orleans) to more effectively support the needs of each community. Since then, we have pivoted to focus on education and ensuring students have the right supports at the right time to graduate on-time and ready for their next steps. We do this by focusing on the ABCs: Attendance, Behavior and Course Performance in English Language Arts and Math. Our AmeriCorps Members work with small groups of students to provide the extra supports they need to be successful.

In 2019, City Year New Orleans has 45 AmeriCorps Members serving over 3,000 students across 6 partner schools. Since July 1, our AmeriCorps Members have participated in training, been oriented to New Orleans culture and that of their schools and begun supporting students with their attendance, behavior and course performance in Math and English Language Arts.

Fun fact or interesting tidbit regarding your program:

Our AmeriCorps Members fall in love with New Orleans and stay! Since 2012, we have had an average of 30% of our members stay as teachers in the New Orleans community and in the schools we serve. This creates an extra level of support for our AmeriCorps Members as they frequently have alumni as their partner teachers which allows them to have a different type of relationship and support students in a different way.



Stories of Service: Boys and Girls Clubs of North Louisiana

A brief history of the AmeriCorps program:

A Planning Grant was received in 2011 and in August, 2012, the AmeriCorps Program of Ruston, LA began out of a need to provide services to area youth.

AmeriCorps members have allowed the Boys and Girls Clubs of North Louisiana to operate at capacity each of the seven years it has been in existence.

AmeriCorps members play an important role in the life of the children they serve in that they:

- Keep children safe and supervised
- Tutor
- Mentor

During the tornado here in Ruston, some of the AmeriCorps members volunteered to help clean up parts of the city, distribute food and drinks and helped to comfort residents whose homes were destroyed by the tornado.

A timeline or significant moment in the time of the program:

During AmeriCorps Week local and state politicians, university presidents and technical school officials and community partners are invited to an Informational Luncheon. During the luncheon, attendees learn about its local AmeriCorps Program in which they are given statistics about the number of college students serving, educational awards to local colleges and universities and the financial impact on the cities in which they live.

Also, two members of the AmeriCorps Staff left the program; one to serve as the Chief Executive Officer at another Boys and Girls Clubs and the other as a full-time Social Worker.

FUN FACT OR INTERESTING TIDBIT REGARDING YOUR PROGRAM:

AmeriCorps members have expressed their pleasure in helping to create and develop innovative projects for the children they serve. They also enjoy meeting and exchanging ideas with alumni and new members.



Stories of Service: Kat Schweitzer, Program Manager

Rebuilding Together New Orleans

AmeriCorps Alumnus, Served two-terms in Louisiana

How national service impacted you:

National service has had a huge impact on my life! I finished undergrad knowing I wanted to serve in AmeriCorps, but beyond that I was lost. My AmeriCorps service opened doors I didn't even know existed, and helped me find what I'm passionate about. I've met some of the most amazing people through AmeriCorps, and some of my closest friends are ones I made during service. As an AmeriCorps program manager, I feel like my experience has come full circle, and one of my favorite parts of my job is seeing the excitement for service and drive in our oncoming members.

Your best memory from your service:

I spent my two AmeriCorps terms rebuilding homes in New Orleans, and has heartwarming as the big moments were (attending Welcome Home parties, etc) my best memories come from the small day-by-day moments. I miss lunch on the porch with my cohort, volunteer photo contests, and "fresh floor yoga" after finishing flooring projects with my co-worksite manager the most!



***Stories of Service: ShreveCorps
An AmeriCorps program of Shreveport Green***

ShreveCorps was founded in 1994. In our first year, we undertook 10 projects over the course of a 9 week summer program. 45 young adults completed the program. Projects included: neighborhood cleanups, neighborhood recycling pilot program, clearing trails, and even refurbishing a historic cemetery. In the following 17 years, we continued our work in community enhancement. We planted thousands of trees, collected hazardous materials for proper disposal and recycling, recycled telephone books, and collected Christmas trees, bringing them down to the Gulf coast where they were used to rebuild the coastline. We educated local children about recycling by facilitating recycling center tours and about nature through summer Earth Camp. We made improvements at homes and schools, built wheelchair ramps for the people of our community with physical disabilities, cleaned waterways and trails, and made them more handicap accessible so that *everyone* in our community could have access to the beauty of nature! We established gardens throughout Shreveport and mobilized countless volunteers to help us along the way. In 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged our home state, ShreveCorps members traveled south to the Lower Ninth Ward and later to Cameron Parish to help with the recovery efforts. Two teams of seven members spent a week each gutting houses, cleaning them, and rebuilding. But hurricane relief was only a small part of what ShreveCorps did that year. When they returned home, they continued their regular service, planting trees, clearing trails, picking up litter, and keeping Shreveport safe, livable, and beautiful.

Just as we responded in 2005 when the hurricanes hit, in 2011, ShreveCorps's priorities shifted, as the obesity epidemic swept the nation. By 2011, Louisiana's obesity rate had doubled from the time that ShreveCorps began in the early 1990's. In Caddo Parish, over 31% of the population was obese.

One of the major causes of obesity was the food environment. According to USDA, 90% of urban neighborhoods in Shreveport were considered food deserts, or low-income neighborhoods with low access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Food deserts have no full-service grocery stores, so residents rely on the convenience of mini-marts and fast food restaurants where healthy options are severely limited and noticeably more expensive. To help address this critical issue, we switched our focus from Environmental Stewardship to Healthy Futures. We continued building community gardens, this time with the aim of feeding our city's food deserts. We began teaching kids how to eat healthy, how to cook, how to garden, and how to make healthy lifestyle choices! ShreveCorps members teach lessons in nutrition through crafts,

science experiments, original songs, games, and cooking lessons. ShreveCorps members build gardens at each of the schools and community centers where they teach so that the children their can experience the magic of growing their own food! We know from research that community gardeners eat more servings of fruits and vegetables each day than home gardeners or non-gardeners. We know from experience that children are more willing to eat food that they have grown and cooked themselves, food that they understand and feel connected to. We currently work with about 15 different schools and community centers each year, teaching over 600 children how to grow their own food and why it's important to eat healthy foods. We continue to grow and improve our program year after year, and last year, one of our second-term members, Jimmie Bryant, was selected as the AmeriCorps Champion of Service for the State of Louisiana!

For more information about Shreveport Green, visit <http://www.shreveportgreen.org/> or call 318-219-1888.



***Stories of Service: Kyle Wedberg, Volunteer Louisiana Commission Chair
President/CEO, NOCCA
AmeriCorps Alumnus, City Year Boston***

Impact:

National Service changed the course of my life. I had no idea that would be the case when I signed on to be a corps member with City Year right out of college. It was my second turn in a classroom and I learned that I really loved education and helping students find the best versions of themselves. I left City Year after my corps year, but returned on staff and found a path that ultimately led me to Louisiana as I led the start-up of the sites in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Now I have the opportunity to help lead service across the state as Chair of Volunteer Louisiana. I was given the opportunity to serve, I was shown how serve by my elders, and through this path I found a life that gave more to me than I can ever fully repay.

Best Story:

I remember bringing a group of City Year Alumni to serve as the first corps members in Baton Rouge after Katrina and Rita. There was nothing about the act that made sense. We started the site in three months. We were working a lot of physical service in and around South Louisiana during the weekends. There were people from across the country that had never even been to Louisiana that were now serving its population at its most vulnerable time. City Year is now the largest AmeriCorps program in the state. I pause every once in a while to remember those first few alumni who came back to serve for a year in the state I love and call home. I have such gratitude for their selfless act to serve at a time and a place where it was very much needed. I am also deeply inspired by the longitudinal work that has been done by City Year over the 15 years they have existed here in Louisiana.

