

April
2016

VISTA Insider

The Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project Newsletter
Supported by Housing Action Illinois

SAVE THE DATE!

- April Site Visits
- April 8th: All 2016 2017 IASHP VISTA positions will be open for applications.
- April 20th: Deborah's Place Volunteer Appreciation Event
- April 21st: Spring Retreat
- April 30th Monthly Report due

Specials Thanks To:

Amanda DiJulis
Perla Rodriguez
Lauren Madison
Celia Collum
Bibian Guevara

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Looking Back on March

A Letter from the Editor

March is a big month for all of our current members. For those that started their terms of service in the summer, March marks the beginning of the end of their terms, and for those members that started in November, March marks the end of the first third of their terms of service.

For all the VISTAs, March is a time of reflection on what has been accomplished, and a time to figure out what is next:

- Apply to graduate school?
- Take on another term of service through VISTA, AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps?
- Pursue employment?
- Stay or leave Illinois?

These are the questions going through our VISTAs' minds. Moreover, these questions can be complicated, and, when we try to tackle these questions on our own, the questions can be stress inducing (to put it lightly). With the time in mind, Housing Action is hosting its Spring Retreat for the VISTAs in April. The Spring Retreat is a full day event. The first half is focused on life after VISTA i.e. resumes, cover letters, networks. The second half is an appreciation activity, which we are happy to announce, is a White Sox game.

-WILLIE HEINEKE

Updates and Reminders

Interested in becoming an IAHSP Member: If you or somebody you know is interested in joining the IAHSP team, be sure to keep an open eye out after April 8 for available positions! You can email vista@housingactionil.org for more information.

The IAHSP Resource Page: Current VISTAs, your VISTA Leaders sent over a link to an enhanced resource we made. It is an online resource for VISTA members to get relevant information about benefits, Chicago resources, and helpful tips on living as a VISTA. Check it out and give us FEEDBACK!

Peer Support Calls: We are going to have our second round of peer support calls next month. Especially because of the organizing for the Spring Retreat (April 21)!

HOLLA! VISTA MEMBER SHOUT-OUTS for March 2016

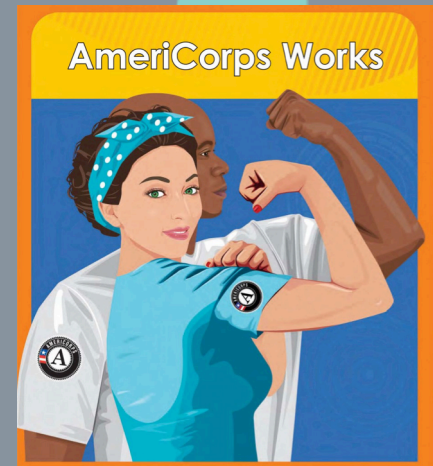
Matthew Wrobel, VISTA at Northwest Side Housing Center, put together a Social Media Workshop for Organizers training.

Jay Cook, VISTA at HOPE Fair Housing Center, raised \$360 for the DuPage 5K Human Race.

Michelle Gibson, VISTA at Rockford Area Habitat For Humanity, helped her organization obtain \$1,639 worth of in-kind donations.

AnaPatricia Marguez, VISTA at Mid Central Community Action Center, organized and over sought three workshops for MCCAC's Green Education Series.

Amanda Diiulus, VISTA at Kenneth Young Center, organized, marketed, and managed an in-kind (art supplies) and cash fundraiser for KYC's Drop In Center!



TRIVIA!!!

1. 20% of all trees reside in this country.
2. This actor was actually born and raised in West Philadelphia.
3. What color is hippo milk?
4. More car accidents happen on this day of the week more than any other.
5. Humans start lying at what age?
6. A "fluffle" is a group of what type of animal?
7. The wind on this planet is so fast it breaks the sound barrier.
8. This book is the most shoplifted book in the world.
9. What is the national animal of Scotland?
10. True or false? If you put a can of Coke in the water it will float and a can of Diet Coke will sink.

Last Month's Answers:

(a) Serbia (b) Cleaning Wallpaper (c) Issac Newton
(d) Denist (e) Baseball, England (f) Croissant (g) Guitar
(h) 10 (i) They don't have college degrees (j) Henry Ford

VISTA to VISTA...with Perla Rodriguez

About Perla

Tell us a little about yourself.

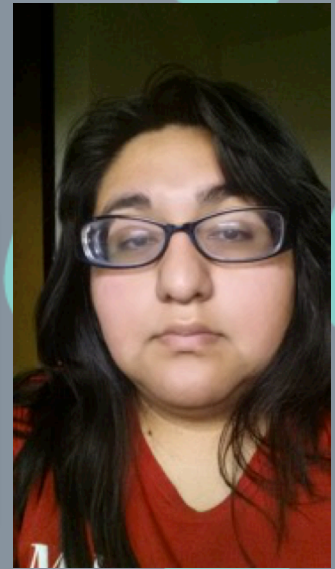
I am from the southeast side of Chicago, which means that I am five to ten minutes from Indiana. I am currently attending the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to complete my bachelors in Health Administration. I am a very family oriented and I am a single child. I have two dogs that I consider to be my siblings. That being said I love being around dogs as much as possible. I realized that even though I was born in a wonderful city like Chicago, I like to live in areas that have a mixture of rural and urban lifestyle.

What motivated or inspired you to become an AmeriCorps Vista?

I was an intern for the same organization that I am serving am serving now and I was approached by the Program Manager in the Social Service department. My passion is health care but I also developed an interest in Social services. During my internship, I was a case aid for the Case Managers. I would go with them on client visits and interact with the clients. I decided that I would like to gain more experience in this field to merge with my knowledge of healthcare. Hopefully in the future, I will be in a leadership position where I can use both of my knowledge and experiences to benefit low-income families and individuals. I have begun to develop viewpoints and mentality is more open and understanding. I consider these two aspects to be essential in my current and future work.

Champaign County Regional Planning Commission

Perla Rodriguez



What does your typical day look like?

It varies every day is different from other days. Sometimes I have several projects going at the same time. The majority of the time, I have a different agenda for each day depending on deadlines or other events that I have going on. I do not have a set time when I am supposed to be at the office because I am either in class or have a meeting that I have to attend. Regional Planning Commission, the agency that I work in, has three offices in the Champaign-Urbana area. I may be in several offices during the day. Sometimes I enjoy not having a set number of things that I have to do every day because it keeps me on point and I have to be very attentive to what I am doing. I plan each day as it comes because I do not know what might pop up next. If I have any down time, I try to go to other departments and learn what they are doing for the community.

Where do you see yourself in the next five years?

I see myself working in the administration department of a hospital and owning my first home. Other than that I will let things development as time goes on.

What advice would you give incoming Vistas so that they can have a successful year of service?

I would advise incoming Vista to take advantage of everything that is presented to them. AmeriCorps VISTA opens the doors for young people to learn valuable skill sets to prepare them for the working world. Take initiative, make mistakes, ask for feedback because this will help you learn and learn new concepts. Taking advantage of every opportunity will open doors to new relationship or experience that may lead you to different places in life.

VISTA to VISTA...with Celia Collum

About Celia

Tell us a little about yourself?

I'm originally from Leawood, Kansas, which is a suburb of Kansas City. I went to school at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio (aka The Middle of Nowhere) and graduated with a degree in sociology last May. I'm both a dog person and a cat person, I have two little brothers, and I love to travel.

What motivated or inspired you to become an AmeriCorps Vista?

I've always been passionate about social justice, and some of the classes I took in college helped me understand how fundamental housing is in enabling opportunities, especially in low-income communities. One of my best friends told me about the Chicago Rehab Network because her sister was a VISTA here a few years ago. After talking to her and hearing about her experience and what she's done since her year of service, I realized it would be a great opportunity!

What does your typical day look like?

I sleep in for as long as humanly possible and arrive at work by 10am. Most of the day is spent constructing grant proposals, but I'm also responsible for researching new funding opportunities and maintaining our database. After work, I try to spend time outside, so sometimes I walk home or go on a jog around my neighborhood.

What has been the most challenging aspect of your year of service?

Before I started working at CRN, I had never written a grant proposal. I definitely felt like there was a steep learning curve when I first started, but things have gotten a little easier.

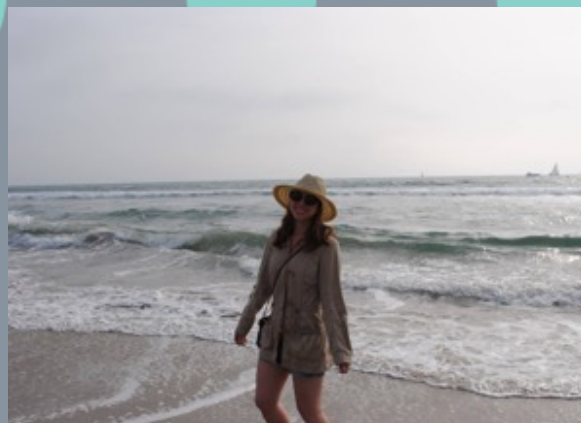
Where do you see yourself in the next five years?

It's hard to say where I'll be in the next five years, but come September, I'll be at the University of Chicago working on a master's degree at the School of Social Service Administration. I think I want to stay in the nonprofit world, but I'm not totally sure in what capacity I'll work in.

What advice would you give incoming VISTAs so that they can have a successful year of service?

Lean on the network of VISTAs (and other friends) for support! This job can be really difficult, but talking to people who are going through a similar experience can make things a little bit easier.

Celia Collum



Chicago Rehab Network

Some Words from Lauren Madison

Fellow VISTAs,

At the end of every winter, I get a little antsy. I bet you can relate. After months of feeling very strongly that human evolution failed us by not allowing for hibernation, we seek sunlight. We crave activity. And living in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs, there's no shortage of activities to take part in. But living on the VISTA budget, it can be easy to allow a mindset of scarcity to take over. Loans, rent, utilities, food, medical bills... it's true that it all adds up, leaving little left over to devote to *activities.* But I'm writing you all to advocate for a little something my friend Donna Meagle taught me: TREAT. YOUR. SELF.

Or at the very least, take care of yourself. Between expenses, work, family, concerns for the future, etc., life as a VISTA isn't always a cakewalk. It's easy to get rundown, to forget to do the things that make you happy, or to think that your happiness isn't as important as all the other stuff. So consider this a reminder to prioritize your wellness—meaning your emotional and physical health—by doing stuff that makes you feel good, mind and body.

But how can we do this on the VISTA budget? First, thank you to our VISTA leaders for keeping the Facebook page up-to-date with free stuff to do. Those posts remind us of the abundance of social, life-giving, refreshing things to do around us.

Some other ideas for promoting wellness on the cheap:

- 1) **Enjoy the outdoors?** It's easy to feel blocked in by concrete in this city, but with a little intentionality, Chicago and the surrounding area have a whole lot to offer the nature-lover in you. I'm particularly excited about taking advantage of the city's extensive parks system this summer. Get out there and get some vitamin D, folks!
- 2) **Take advantage of money-saving sites like Groupon.** My love for Groupon knows no limits. Sitting in the office all day giving you back troubles? Groupon. Got a hankering for Indian food? Groupon. Been wanting to get your down-dog on? Groupon. In need of a night with friends at Emporium? Groupon. Find things that would otherwise be unrealistic splurges for us that, at a discounted rate, could be just the once-in-a-while treat-yourself you need to feel happy and balanced.
- 3) **Take your dang vacation days!** They give 'em to us for a reason.

Most of all, do you, folks. You know yourself best. Do whatever you need to do this month to feel like you're being a good pal to yourself.

Peace,
Lauren Madison

NEXT MONTH...

- Our VISTAs in the news: Let us know if you or any of your work is featured in a news article.
- Let us know if there's an article you would like to write!
- Would you like your own section in the newsletter? Advice column, crossword puzzle, quiz or activity idea section don't be shy—let us know!

Send to: vista@housingactionil.org

About Us...

Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project is an AmeriCorps VISTA team made up of twenty-one member organizations throughout the state of Illinois, including: Access Living, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Chicago Rehab Network, Claretian Associates, Corporation for Supportive Housing, HOPE Fair Housing, Kenneth Young Center, Lawyers Committee For Better Housing, Latin United Community Housing Association, Mercy Housing Lakefront, Mid Central Community Action, Northwest Side Housing Center, Respond Now, Rockford Area Habitat for Humanity, South Suburban Housing Center, Spanish Coalition for Housing, Chicago Lawyers's Committee, Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), Housing Action Illinois.

April 1. This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty-four.

~Mark Twain

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