



SPECIAL
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AmeriCorps Retreat...reflections on a Collaborative Event

AmeriCorps Retreat-Day One

As we sat in our bus and traveled to Headlands Institute, we were experiencing what would be our last trip together and patiently awaited our final destination. As we drove up the highway passing the vast agricultural views and the rhythmic rolling hills, we found ourselves in the midst of uniquely built skyscrapers, beautiful bay views and a diverse vision of people in every direction.

The energy in the city stimulated much excitement in all of us as our destination was just around the corner. Then in a blink of an eye we transitioned from a fast paced environment into a serene wave of nature. Uncertain of what exactly awaited us in the red and white buildings ahead, we gathered our belongings and made our way up the hill to the Raven dormitory and made ourselves at home. From introductions and icebreakers to dinner with unfamiliar faces in an unusual environment, adaptation was on the rise and we all would surely be put to the test. **Written By: Julissa Gonzalez**



AmeriCorps Retreat-Day Two

After settling in on Thursday, we were all ready for day two of our retreat at the Headlands Institute in Sausalito. We began with a presentation from Gerrard Jolly of Community Health Corps/NACHC. Mr. Jolly gave a presentation entitled "Life after AmeriCorps" and he provided us with information regarding our time after our service terms. We were also led on a hike by Mr. Jolly which included many scenic views. Another highlight of our day was a Resume Workshop given by our very own Sosha Quintero. This presentation was very helpful because we will all be moving on and a great resume is a must. By far though, the best part of day two was the bonfire that we had after dinner and a Talking Stick Activity regarding our experiences in AmeriCorps. This activity ensured that only one person at a time had the floor and that the person speaking was fully heard. We concluded our long night with s'mores and then prepared for Saturday, our last day.

Written By: Erica Mireles

AmeriCorps Retreat-Day Three

Saturday, our third and final day was filled with student presentations and networking opportunities. AmeriCorps members from across California presented on their service projects, volunteering abroad and food as medicine. CVHN AmeriCorps members presented a workshop on medical ethics with the interest to start a proactive group dialogue. The afternoon ended with a walk to the beach where we were asked to write a letter to ourselves. I decided to write myself a letter of reflection of my time in AmeriCorps and remind myself about all the experiences I was part of. Having been at the Headlands Institute for 2 days I was becoming more used to the beautiful scenery and vibrant people that surrounded me. Much like my time was finishing at the retreat... so was my time in the AmeriCorps program and it was bittersweet. I felt proud to have finished a program that allowed me to help the underserved and meet amazing individuals along the way. Although our time is over, the AmeriCorps mission continues and I am confident that it will be part of us as we pursue our future endeavors.

Written By: Cynthia Mendez



CVHN AmeriCorps Members... A Year Later



CVHN AmeriCorps Members at the 2009 California Health Corps Retreat in Sausalito.

"I connected with my community and formed relationships with organizations who can further our objective of reaching and assisting our low-income population."

Name: **Ashley Buschman**

Health Center: Del Norte Oroville Family Health Center

Position Title: Data Specialist
What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

While working at my health center I reported all information on the HIV and AIDS patients to the State Office of AIDS through their electronic system. Ensuring all information was reported

accurately and helping to ensure funding for the HIV and AIDS Program. I also input all data for the Cardiovascular Collaborative Program, a new program that provides provider's with a collection of the most recent data on their patients and works towards getting patients involved with their care.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I believe my service made a difference at my Health Center and in my community, because I was doing a job necessary to keeping these programs running in our health centers, and I feel these programs are an important resource to our community.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

During my year of service I feel like I have grown and changed a lot while seeing first hand some of the struggles and needs of the patients in my community. It has made me confident that the healthcare field is the one I would like to work in for the rest of my life and hopefully someday I can help address some of the needs and concerns in my community and better the lives of some of the patients and community members.

Name: **Julissa Gonzalez**

Health Center: Golden Valley Health Centers

Position Title: Health Education Assistant/Green Team Coordinator/Healthy S. Merced Project Assistant

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

During my year term with AC I believe I was a committed leader for GVHC's Green Team. I was timely and organized with the health educational items, and lastly I was very respectful and culturally competent during outreach for the Healthy South Merced project and in my daily interactions with patients and staff at GVHC's.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I truly believe that I made a difference in various ways and in various communities in Merced County, from educating the public during outreach, to doing physical labor for Habitat for Humanity.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I feel that I have not only become more knowledgeable of the healthcare system across the board, particularly in an underserved community, but also more aware and familiar with the community I reside and work in. As a result, I have become more involved and active in community development and policy making

Name: **E'Bonique Sullivan**

Health Center: Inland Behavioral & Health Services

Position Title: Outreach Specialist/ Food-stamp worker

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I connected with my community and formed relationships with organizations who can further our objective of reaching and assisting our low-income population. I also volunteered my services beyond my usual requirements so that our team could achieve as much success as possible.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I think so because I believe that if you work hard enough then you always contribute in a way that is helpful. I showed that even though I am young, maturity and determination can go a long way. How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

As I said before, I connected with my community and now that I have relationships with other social organizations, I can be a more active member in my community by giving my knowledge every time I leave the building.

Name: **Katrina Fischer**

Health Center: Golden Valley Health Centers

Position Title: Diabetes Assistant
What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

It took a while to become adjusted, but I feel that I've finally become good at navigating the clinic system at GVHC. This was initially important to identify the team to develop the GVHC Sweet Success program, and now is important to continue collaborating with the many players involved!! In addition, I think that I have worked well with the different programs at GVHC, which has been mutually beneficial.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I hope that my work helping to develop the framework for a GVHC diabetes and pregnancy program will help many women (and babies!) in both Merced and Modesto. This is especially exciting because ones health as a baby has many effects on ones health as an adult. Therefore, improving birth outcome can truly affect someone's life course.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I am much more realistic of the challenges presented by working in a community health center. It's often not possible to jump in and think that things will change simply because you want them too. Creating change takes teamwork and an understanding of the system... lessons that I will take with me into my future steps in life.

Name: **Cynthia Mendez**

Health Center: Central Valley Health Network (Sacramento)

Position Title: Community Research Specialist

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I would say that I gave every experience/task/assignment my 100% effort. The desire I have to learn about people, communities, healthcare allowed me to have a positive attitude and focus on what I could learn from the experience as well as what I could teach others.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I do believe that I made a difference, naturally it's not common to acknowledge one's own accomplishments but I do think that my work with AmeriCorps and specifically within CVHN has made a contribution to the overall common goal of the organization. I have contributed my time and effort to my surrounding community by participating in community service projects in addition to conducting a novel research project which included all 12 health center corporations within CVHN. I think far greater is the difference AmeriCorps has made for me as a person and community member.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I have become more aware of my community and the hard work and dedication required to keep a community safe, healthy and thriving. I have learned about the power of community service thanks to AmeriCorps and I feel that I will incorporate it into my future career as well as into my family activities.

Name: **Maria Melgoza**

Health Center: Clinica Sierra Vista

Position Title: Medi-Cal Outreach Worker

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I feel like I helped many people in many ways!

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

Yes! I believe I made a difference in many lives! I enjoyed my experience very much!

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I changed in many ways! I learned that many people here in my community are in need of many things!

Many people are going through some really bad times and I was not aware of that! AmeriCorps helped me to realize that!

Name: **Sukhvir Rajania**

Health Center: Livingston Medical Group

Position Title: AmeriCorps Member

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I worked all around working on anything that was needed to be done. I think I did everything that I did well because is somehow it benefited the Clinic.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I do think that I made a difference because now at the clinic a lot of work has been done now. Also more of the Punjabi community are more aware of the clinic and want to better their health or take care of their health. That is what most matters that people get their health care and leave the clinic more educated on their health.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I feel more connected to my community and that I am more aware of the community and what is going on in the community.

Name: **Marlene Her**

Health Center: Community Medical Centers

Position Title: Health Educator

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I think that one thing I did well this year was learning how to work in a clinic environment. I was intimidated at first and found it hard to do anything because I felt I did not have the experience and had little knowledge. It took me really stepping out of my comfort zone and really testing my own limits to really find what I was capable of doing and what I needed to work on.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I feel like my first year of AmeriCorps was really just an introduction to what making a difference will take and what it's all about. I feel as if there's always more that I can do. I'm not sure if I made a difference in others or not but I know that others made a difference in me.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I've realized that I am needed in my community and that I'd like to serve my community no matter what career path I take.

Name: **Desiree Rivera**

Health Center: United Health Centers

Position Title: Process Improvement Assistant

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I feel that I did very well keeping up with the Reach

Out and Read program here at United Health Centers.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

Yes, I believe that I made a difference every time that I volunteered in the different events throughout my 2 years in AmeriCorps. I enjoyed being apart of the events because it would always feel good knowing that I helped someone out that day.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I've become more involved with the community ever since AmeriCorps. In high school I was in leadership and was very involved with the community in my hometown, but joining AmeriCorps broadened my experience in the community by volunteering in different cities. It feels good to know that I've helped out in other cities, not just my hometown.

Name: **Erica Mirelos**

Health Center: CVHN Fresno

Position Title: Regional Advocate Specialist

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I feel that I did a good job at integrating myself into the programs and campaigns of the *Network for a Healthy California- Central Valley Region* and I am proud of my contributions.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I do believe that I made a difference in that I was able to participate in many community outreach events during my service term.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I have changed in the sense that I am more confident in getting involved and I feel that I have more to offer because of the experiences I have been able to be a part of here at CVHN

Name: **Monica Melgoza**

Health Center: Clinica Sierra Vista

Position Title: Medi-Cal Outreach Worker

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

Learned all I could.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

Yes, I helped clients with needs and was kind when I helped.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

In the beginning I was shy and now I help clients with confidence.

Name: **Antoinette Baktiar**

Health Center: Clinica Sierra Vista

Position Title: Medi-Cal Patient Representative

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

Provide excellent customer service assistance to patients with paperwork. I also signed up Medi-Cal Patients for food stamps, healthy families and healthy kids.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

Yes, because I provided great customer assistance to underserved communities. Making a difference and giving back to the community.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

Yes, because I understand health centers and what they offer to the surrounding communities.

Name: **Veronica Lopez**

Health Center: Community Medical Centers

Position Title: Health Education Intern

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

Medical Billing, customer service, eligibility and outreach to underserved communities in addition to testing people for HIV and provide helpful health education materials.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

Yes, because I helped people who wouldn't otherwise would not have an idea about the services of CMC's clinics. Offering them programs to qualify for health services gave them an ability to make choices and take a hold of their own health-care.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

Yes, because I understand what community health center/ nonprofit organizations do to give back to their communities, specifically the underserved.

Name: **Rosalba Lopez**

Health Center: Clinica Sierra Vista

Position Title: Reach out and Read Assistant

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I did not lose hope and kept being persistent with the AmeriCorps mission.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

I believe that there were always opportunities and although doors may have been closed at times, I was always looking for a small opening where I was able to make a small act that maybe changed someone's life.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

I am definitely more knowledgeable about the challenges that our health care system faces. I think that now I am more passionate about advocating for those communities and hope to continue empowering them. Our communities deserve a better health care system.

Name: **Sikander Sandhu**

Health Center: Livingston Medical Group

Position Title: Community Health Outreach Specialist

What did you do well during your AmeriCorps experience?

I think I did most things well that I was asked to do. Mostly I have been working with the data entry for the I2I program and I believe I am doing a pretty good job. I did all the things that were asked of me and did them all to the best of my abilities.

Do you believe you made a difference during your AmeriCorps experience? If so, how?

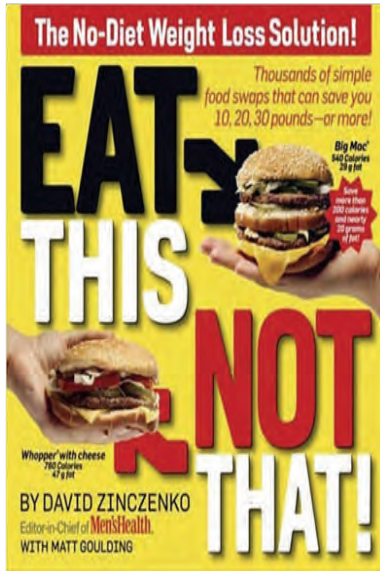
Yes, I definitely think I made a difference during my experience because we helped a lot of Punjabi speaking people understand the things we tried to explain to them and to get them to be aware of the problems in society. Also I have helped out the clinic and other aspects of my work place improve.

How have you changed as a community member since your AmeriCorps service began?

At first I did not know that there were so many people that did not know about the free clinical help provided at LMG, I didn't even know, but now that I know I can tell people if they need help to go there because they will be taken care of even if it is difficult for them to pay.

What are You Reading?

In the interest of cultivating more and more readers, this section is dedicated to introducing and highlighting an interesting book read by our AmeriCorps Members.



Eat This, Not That!
By: David Zinczenko

Americans spend more than \$400 billion a year eating out, and behind each burger, turkey sandwich, and ice cream sundae is a simple decision that could help you control your weight—and your life. The problem is, restaurant chains and food producers aren't interested in helping you make healthy choices. In fact, they invest \$30 billion a year on advertising, much of it aimed at confusing eaters and disguising the fat and calorie counts of their products. All of that has changed with *EAT THIS, NOT THAT!*. This book puts the entire food industry under the spotlight, and arms you with the savvy tricks and insider information it takes to eat well no matter where you are.

Life after AmeriCorps What's Next?

Congratulations! At this point you are near or have finished your year of service in the AmeriCorps program. What happens next? Here are some suggestions from members:

- Whether you decide to go to school, establish a career, or continue another year in service, know that your year of service in AmeriCorps will forever be a part of the path you follow. The only one suggestion I would like to leave you all with is that in all decisions that must be made, whether big or small, being true to oneself is the one thing that will guide you to true success.
- Look at the last year and ask yourself "What are some of the projects/activities that I have enjoyed the most?" and line those up with your future goals.
- List all the skills you have gathered in the last year, make sure to update your resume and incorporate your trainings, conferences, and leadership experiences that you have had.
- Network!! The importance of networking is critical and you can never network enough! It will help you expand your communication skills and allow others to learn about you. The doors you open today via networking can and will be used in the future.
- The best thing to take away is to never forget this year, continue your commitment to serve and participate in community service in your local neighborhood or community.

"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

Cesar E. Chavez



Central Valley Health Network

Incorporated in 1998, the Central Valley Health Network (CVHN) is a consortium of 12 Federally Qualified Health Center corporations that provide comprehensive preventive primary care services and advocate on behalf of low-income and medically underserved families throughout the northern, Central Valley and Inland Empire areas of California. In most Central Valley communities, CVHN members are the only safety net provider.

CVHN's mission is to facilitate community health centers' strength in the marketplace and to support member's effective delivery of high quality and accessible health care. CVHN staff support members through: advocacy, technical assistance, program development and administration, and training.

The AmeriCorps Informer is a monthly publication written, edited and reviewed by current AmeriCorps members throughout CVHN. Its purpose is to provide insightful and informative news and current events to our members. The newsletter also serves as a means to stay informed about events or changes happening within the organization. It also introduces all AmeriCorps members to the entire network therefore encouraging networking and collaboration opportunities.

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Caring For California's Heartland

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