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Subject: Nevada Volunteers Newsletter April 2009
Date: April 20, 2009 4:15:13 PM PDT
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NEVADA VOLUNTEERS NEWSLETTER APRIL 2009

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK APRIL 19-25, 2009



“Celebrating People in Action”

This year's theme for National Volunteer Week, commemorated April 19-25, 2009, is “Celebrating People in Action.” We are proud to honor the energy and impact of engaged citizens getting things done. Please join us in thanking the thousands of Nevadans who recognize they're part of the solution and are committed to “action.” Our volunteers are making a difference all over the Silver State.

NEVADA IS PROUD OF OUR VOLUNTEERS!

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

With strong bipartisan support, Congress passed the **Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act** on March 31, 2009. The Act reauthorizes AmeriCorps programs for the first time in sixteen years and will increase the program from 75,000 AmeriCorps members a year to 250,000 over the next five years.

This sets us on a new course for service and volunteering in Nevada. We have long recognized the cost-effectiveness of service and volunteering as strategies to address some of our most pressing needs. Aside from helping communities and connecting citizens through civic engagement, volunteering leads to greater life satisfaction and better overall health.

In the face of unprecedented economic need, Nevadans will have increased opportunities to serve their communities through AmeriCorps in exchange for a modest living allowance and an education award of more than \$5,350 during a year long term of service. We anticipate that more organizations will be able to sponsor AmeriCorps programs as a result of the Kennedy Serve America Act.

Investing in service yields high results for Nevada. For every one AmeriCorps member, 30 other volunteers are generated. For every \$1 the state invests, there is a return of more than \$19 in federal and private funding.

The Kennedy Serve America Act also supports a Volunteer Generation fund and a Nonprofit Capacity Building program both designed to assist with strengthening the nation's volunteer infrastructure.

NEVADA VOLUNTEERS RECEIVES SPECIAL SERVICE LEARNING FUNDING

Nevada Volunteers received congressionally-directed funding of \$238,000 to build and expand service learning programs at Nevada's colleges and universities in the passage of the 2009 federal budget.

Service learning is a pedagogical approach that gives students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community. Nevada Volunteers in conjunction with its VISTA program and in collaboration with the higher education campuses will be planning and implementing the program over the next fifteen months. An emphasis will be placed on connecting students, post secondary faculty and community partners with each other to expand service throughout Nevada.



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON VOLUNTEERING

Nevada Volunteers is pleased to host two Community Conversations on Volunteerism, one in Las Vegas and one in Reno. We know that many nonprofits and individuals are struggling with the downturn of the economy and hope to provide a forum for looking at creative ways to deal with the situation from both a personal and organizational perspective. Each conversation will be tailored to the local community with presenters sharing unique and effective ways they are meeting the challenges we all face. The conversations will include time for discussion and feedback from the participants.

The Conversations will include a Community Report on Volunteering from Shawn Lecker-Pomaville, CEO, Nevada Volunteers. First Lady Dawn Gibbons will join us to present the Nevada National Service Awards that celebrate the accomplishments of our state's national service programs and members. Mr. John Power, CEO, of The Volunteer Center Serving San Francisco and San Mateo will provide the lunchtime talk, "Now IS the Right Time to Invest—in Volunteers!"

The Community Conversation in Las Vegas will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2009. The Reno event is Friday, May 15, 2009. Both are scheduled from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm with lunch available for just \$10. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Janet Wright at janet@nevadavolunteers.org.

NATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING CONFERENCE REPORT

Last month, Nevada Volunteers AmeriCorps VISTA, Jo Ella Barrie, attended the 20th annual National Service-Learning Conference: "Growing Hope, Cultivating Change." 2,200 youth and adult participants from all 50 states and 36 countries gathered in Nashville to talk about best practices and current trends in service-learning. Students of all ages and backgrounds shared their projects and how service-learning has made a difference in their lives. Recent studies have shown that high-quality service-learning experiences can make learning more relevant and that students who participate are more likely to continue to volunteer and contribute to their communities after graduation. Jo Ella reported to Nevada Volunteers' staff that, "It was exciting to experience the energy of a national conference devoted to making a difference through service-learning. I saw many different models for service-learning and networked with practitioners from all over the world." The information and contacts gained from this conference will help Nevada Volunteers as we continue to promote service-learning throughout the state. You can find service-learning resources on our website at www.nevadavolunteers.org.

DINA TITUS MEETS SOUTHERN NEVADA AMERICORPS MEMBERS

Congresswoman Dina Titus visited U.S. VETS-Las Vegas on April 8, 2009, toured the homeless veterans' rehab program and met with Southern NV AmeriCorps members. Members had the opportunity to talk with the Congresswoman and thank her for fully supporting the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and actually sponsoring an amendment to create a National Service Reserve Corps.

Titus' amendment creates a National Service Reserve Corps composed of alumni of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps as well as veterans that can be called upon in times of natural disasters and emergencies to start the relief and rebuilding process. The Corps members will have valuable training experience from their previous service as well as annual training sessions in emergency response.

"Our nation is facing numerous challenges and our state of Nevada is one of the hardest hit. With public need rising all across the country, now is the time to strengthen and grow our AmeriCorps and volunteer programs that provide an invaluable service to our nation," Congresswoman Titus said. "With the creation of a new National Service Reserve Corps, we are providing opportunities for those who have already shown the commitment and determination to serve their community and continue their efforts to help those in need."



CIVIC REFLECTION FOR SOUTHERN NEVADA VISTA VOLUNTEERS

Imagine stepping back from life's stress and taking some time to think about - not how- but why you do what you do. Now imagine getting together with other like - minded people and talking about your values and the choices you make in serving your community. Add beginning this conversation with a short reading that help you gather and articulate

your thoughts. This, in a nutshell, is civic reflection. AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers in Southern Nevada are doing just that in a series of workshops offered by Nevada Volunteers.

Over 1,500 AmeriCorps members have participated in civic reflection in the past five years. Evaluations consistently demonstrate civic reflection's positive impact: Improved relationships with colleagues, stronger individual commitment to service and volunteerism, a fresh perspective on day-to-day service and a new found ability to see the "big picture" while considering a variety of perspectives.

A recent Southern Nevada VISTA participant remarked: "I normally don't enjoy group discussions like this, but I have to admit that we've made this interesting and definitely worthwhile. I kind of avoid participating in discussion groups and 'happy talk' but this is definitely a "Thumbs Up!" from me."

Last year, the Project on Civic Reflection's AmeriCorps participant evaluations indicated that 90% thought CR challenged them to think more deeply about their impact on others; 91% said CR helped examine the complexities of service; 70% thought CR improved their AmeriCorps experience and 74% said CR helped improve relationships with other AmeriCorps members.

Similar workshops series are being offered in Northern Nevada under a grant supported by Nevada Humanities. For more information regarding these workshops email Jo Ella Barrie at joella@nevadavolunteers.org.



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: PARASOL TAHOE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation's AmeriCorps Team hosted their third annual volunteer appreciation celebration on April 1st, 2009. Themed "Hollywood Stars," over 200 community members were in attendance to honor 40 special volunteers who have made significant contributions to their nonprofit agencies. Bill Horn, General Manager for Incline Village General Improvement District provided a generous contribution of the use of the Chateau for lunch. Wal-Mart, Safeway, Village Market, and NV Volunteers also provided support. Herb Lightman, guest speaker, shared his own story of how volunteers helped millions of Americans survive the Great Depression.



