



# The LeaderCorps Link



**Illinois LeaderCorps is a Member-organized Council that connects AmeriCorps programs and acts as a liaison between Members and the Serve Illinois Commission.**

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## -ABOUT US-

### Mission

The mission of LeaderCorps is to connect AmeriCorps programs in Illinois through state, national and global days of service and promote continued AmeriCorps alumni involvement.

### Vision

The vision of LeaderCorps is to foster effective cross program communication and collaboration among AmeriCorps programs in Illinois.

## AmeriCorps: Lending a Hand in Lincoln's Land



**October 2007 -** Chicago's Project YES! and Project MORE AmeriCorps members work together to beautify the city on Make a Difference Day.



By Jennifer Jones

One of the most influential and beneficial experiences a person can have is that of volunteering. Skill, knowledge, and a sense of purpose are just a few of the many rewards volunteerism can offer a person.

AmeriCorps is a national volunteer-based organization that offers its members a chance to experience the true essence of volunteerism. Formally established in 1993, AmeriCorps serves the communities of the nation through its national, state, and local programs. The goals of AmeriCorps are to improve education, public safety, health, and the environment.

Currently, AmeriCorps has more than 70,000 individuals serving at over 2000 nonprofit organizations. Within the state of Illinois, over 700 AmeriCorps members are serving at one of more than twenty community or faith-based organizations. The Serve Illinois Commission administers Illinois' AmeriCorps programs "to improve Illinois communities by supporting and enhancing volunteerism and community service."

Illinois AmeriCorps members serve as tutors and mentors, assist victims of domestic violence, conduct community health outreach, recruit volunteers, counsel, and protect the environment through their service. Big Brothers and Big Sisters, City Year, Aunt Martha's AmeriCorps, Public Allies, and Land of Lincoln AmeriCorps are just a few of the programs in the Prairie State.

Volunteering is an enriching experience, benefiting those on the receiving end, as well as on the giving end. Illinois AmeriCorps is a growing volunteer organization that is always looking for new ways to extend a helping hand in the Land of Lincoln.

## LeaderCorps Faces: Jennifer Jones



By Abbey Jennings

LeaderCorps member Jennifer Jones, grew up in Palmdale, California, nearly 75 miles from Los Angeles. The oldest of four children, Jennifer has a long history of volunteering. As a high school student, she volunteered at the Children's Center of the Antelope Valley, an organization specializing in counseling for abused children. Jennifer also created a dating violence educational video, which became available as a resource at four high school libraries.

Jennifer entered California State University Northridge in 2001, and was accepted into the Educational Opportunity Program. Throughout her undergraduate study, Jennifer held a work-study position in the Learning Resource Center. An active participant on campus, Jennifer also served as the historian of the CSUN Gospel Choir during the 2002-2003 school year and joined Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., Omega Kappa chapter in the spring of 2003. Jennifer worked as a domestic violence advocate for the Domestic Violence Center of Santa Clarita for two years, and earned her Baccalaureate degree in Sociology and Anthropology from California State University Northridge in 2007.

Jennifer moved to Chicago in August 2007, seeking opportunities for growth in a new environment. Shortly thereafter, she began her service as an AmeriCorps volunteer with Project MORE (Making Opportunities for Reading Enrichment) of Chicago. Project MORE has six other sites: two English as Second Language (ESL) Centers, two FAST Learning Centers, one Family Literacy Outreach Center, and one Cognizance for Early Education Center. Project MORE also partners with Head Start sites.

Jennifer is the Computer Literacy teacher at the Family Start Learning Center-South (FAST South), teaching two computer classes daily. Interested in working on behalf of children as an advocate for children and domestic violence, Jennifer currently is in the process of applying for Master's degree programs scheduled to begin in the fall of 2008. For now, Jennifer very much enjoys her work site and year of AmeriCorps service.

## Stay Tuned!

Our newsletter is still in the beginning stages, but we look forward to growth. In future issues of the LeaderCorps Link, be sure to look for the following:

- **Watch Out, Help Out!**, a calendar listing upcoming AmeriCorps-sponsored events around Illinois
- **Event Highlight**, a detailed description of a specific event in the calendar
- **Countdown to National AmeriCorps Week:** How much longer? What should I be doing now?
- **Site Spotlight:** learn more about AmeriCorps sites around Illinois

If you have any suggestions about what you would like to see in the LeaderCorps Link, contact AmeriCorps Community Enrichment member Sarah Rodems at [sarah.rodems@springfieldfederation.org](mailto:sarah.rodems@springfieldfederation.org)



**November 2007** - LeaderCorps members from programs throughout Illinois pause for a photo opportunity at the annual Fall Conference in Findlay, IL.

## Fall 2007 LeaderCorps Conference

By Sarah Rodems

After communicating primarily through conference calls, LeaderCorps members were relieved to meet each other in person at November's annual Fall LeaderCorps conference at Eagle Creek Resort in Findlay, Illinois. Trainer and educator Jeff Birdsall of Seattle, Washington, led the group in leadership training and National AmeriCorps Week preliminary planning. In the conference sessions, we were taught about our personal leadership styles and how to utilize them effectively in our communities. Next, we learned how to be proficient in listening and communicating, and improved our facilitation skills through group exercises. Jeff also led the group in the preliminary stages of planning for National AmeriCorps Week.

At the conference, Maria Hetman of Literacy Volunteers of Illinois was named Vice President, and Jeff Hawkinson of City Year was elected the National Days of Service Coordinator position. In addition, three committees were formed: the Marketing and Outreach Committee; the Alumni Committee; and, the National Days of Service Committee, headed by Sarah Rodems, Joseph Reid, and Lisa Todd, respectively. The aim of Marketing and Outreach is to raise awareness about LeaderCorps and AmeriCorps, and to coordinate AmeriCorps program cross-collaboration on service projects. The Alumni Committee is responsible for contacting former AmeriCorps members so that they might continue their "lifetime of service" through volunteer work and mentorship with current AmeriCorps members. National Days of Service members are to plan, implement, and promote National AmeriCorps Week, utilizing media outlets to raise awareness.

In the upcoming year, LeaderCorps aims to strengthen the AmeriCorps program in Illinois through cross-program collaboration and communication. and looks forward to making new connections with Illinois communities.