

Pre-Service Training

By Cassie Wolfe

On Sept. 7, 2010 we officially began our service term as AmeriCorps members in the North Florida Health Corps (NFHC). Everyone seemed a little unsure of fellow members at first, but we quickly warmed up to each other once the pre-service teambuilding activities commenced. Probably the most memorable pre-service training activities included the DuPont YMCA teambuilding and the "Walk in My Shoes".

Training at the YMCA consisted of physical activities and games encouraging teamwork. Some adventurous members took on a ropes climbing course, while other members cheered them on, showing support, pushing them to climb as high as they could. Several individuals surprised themselves and made it to the very top of the course, some even despite a fear of heights. The day's activities truly

helped us collaborate as a team and bond together as a corps. Tania Lugo says, "The best part of pre-service training was getting to know all the amazing members! I feel so lucky to be a part of this group."

The "Walk in my shoes" activity



provided us with a new perspective of the community we would serve. After being told by AmeriCorps Program Man-

ager, Erica Coleman, to, "Dress as if you would be digging a ditch," many of us were a little unsure & nervous of what to expect. Meeting in front of the library of downtown Jacksonville, small groups were presented with family scenarios and various medical destinations.

The purpose of the activity was to put ourselves in the shoes of the population we would be serving by using the community's public transportation to try and reach our destination. The task seemed simple enough until discovering some destinations had moved a few miles away, or we imagined having to travel with multiple small children and additional baggage. The training accomplished its purpose and we walked away empathizing with the process some clients go through just to arrive at one of our facilities.

"The AmeriCorps experience so far has exceeded my expectations. I love having the opportunity to be involved with so many different community organizations."

Birthday Announcements:

Robert Hsu.....November 2 Denae Phillips.....November 11

By Becky Kant

NFHC members have started out the service year with heavy participation in Club Arc. Club Arc is an event held every Friday night from 6 PM- 9 PM at The Arc Jacksonville where individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities can come to socialize and relax with one another. Those who attend Club Arc have the chance to eat, drink, talk, and dance in a friendly, club-like atmosphere. It's a great opportunity to meet new people and kick-off the weekend!

I was lucky enough to serve at Club Arc on the night of their annual talent show. Several NFHC members judged the show while other members passed out food and drinks. The acts were diverse and incredibly impressive. The show included a variety of songs, dances, comedy, and even an appearance by Michael Jackson himself! Prizes were given out for Most Enthusiastic, Greatest Skill, and Best Originality. With a total of 19 participants, the show was a huge success and everyone had tons of fun!

Following the show, the Club broke down into a huge dance party that lasted until the end of the



night. I had a great time hanging out and getting to know new people!

Nicole Savage, a NFHC member, expressed her thoughts on the event, "Dancing with the participants at Club Arc was my favorite! I forgot how much fun it is to really 'get your groove on'". I would definitely encourage any members who haven't had the Club Arc experience to sign up if given the chance; it's an event no member should miss!



Recipe To Try...

Pumpkin Pecan Bread (makes 3 loaves)

What you need:

- 3 1/3 cups flour
- 2 Teaspoons baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 3 cups sugar
- 1 cup oil
- 4 eggs
- 2/3 cups water
- 2 cups canned pumpkin

How to make:

1. Mix dry ingredients together
2. Add remaining ingredients
3. Mix until smooth
4. Grease three 9x5 inch loaf pans, fill each 1/3 full
5. Bake!

*Substitute chocolate chips for the pecans for our favorite version of this treat!

Outside Service

By:Erika Abraham

AmeriCorps members have been engaging in other outside service projects other than those mandatory to all members. A few members joined forces with Beaches Habitat for Humanity for World Habitat Day on October 4. NFHC members volunteered their time helping with a "Neighborhood Clean-up" of a neighborhood surrounding the Beaches Habitat office. World Habitat Day was a fun way to learn about the issues of substandard housing, get involved in the community, and meet new people. NFHC member Linda Maturino also adds, "I really enjoyed interacting with the kids. I think it's definitely important for them to learn about the value of housing so that they can be a catalyst for change as grown ups".

A few other members have been volunteering their time at Ben's Place. Denise Adame, a NFHC member, sums up her experience here:

"I've been serving at least once a week at Ben's Place, an organization that helps individuals with developmental and acquired disabilities, and it was while I was here that I realized that I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be at this point in my life, serving others. I have never had such a peace of mind as I do now".

It is clear that members have been starting out strong with volunteerism in the community and gaining valuable experience while doing it!

Art in the Park

By Erika Abraham

On Saturday, October 9, AmeriCorps members volunteered at Jacksonville's 7th annual Art in the Park. Art in the Park was held at the Northbank Riverwalk at Jacksonville Landing and was hosted by the Department of Recreation and Community Services. This October day was full of sunshine, blue skies, and lots of art! There was a mix of interactive art activities and cultural entertainment.

Art in the Park is catered to letting children explore their artistic side, but parents and other adults joined in the fun as well. Even member Suzziy Leonhard states, "I enjoyed it just as much as the kids! There were so many different types of unique art pro-

jects!" Among the art activities were pottery, painting, print-making, drawing and ceramics. Julia Muntean adds, "I got to help with leaf printing, which was a lot of fun". The middle of the Riverwalk was home to the entertainment for the day. There was live music and dancing, as well as a performance by former Jacksonville Jaguar cheerleaders. Inside, parents and their children could cool off in the air conditioning while trying out new instruments that boasted cultural appeal.

AmeriCorps members were found at each station helping children and adults learn or improve a new art



skill. The best part about

spending the day next to the beautiful St. John's River was being able to interact with members of the community, and to see everyone having a great time enjoying a creative experience. Member Cassandra Tardif agrees, "...it was great to interact with the Jacksonville community in a fun, creative way and to help the kids make crafts that they could take home and share with their family".

Dignity "U" Wear

By Becky Kant

This month NFHC members chose to serve at Dignity U Wear, an organization geared toward providing clothes for the Jacksonville community. Dignity U Wear receives thousands of dollars in donated clothing that is then sorted and packaged to be sent to various groups in need. The NFHC spent several hours on a Friday afternoon working together to aid this organization by sorting some of this donated clothing.

Cassie Sager, one of the NFHC members who participated in this event, expressed her appreciation for the

services that Dignity U Wear provides to the Jacksonville community, "At the Dignity U Wear service project, I was very happy to learn that clothing stores in Jacksonville donated so much new clothing to people in need. I was also very impressed at how organized Dignity U Wear is and will not let a piece of clothing with a tiny hole or stain be donated without being repaired."

This event was a great opportunity to spend time with other members and help out in ways that will directly affect the lives of others.

October Social

By: Erika Abraham

The Social Committee organized a gathering with all members this past weekend at the house of NFHC members Bill McKenna, Julia Muntean, and Cassie Wolfe. The committee planned a night of Fall festivities including pumpkin carving and Halloween themed music. Committee members also prepared Fall-themed snacks including peanut butter acorns, pumpkin cheesecake, chocolate cupcakes, and even some gluten-free treats for our members! Some members dressed up in Halloween costumes. Britta Roach and Cassie Sager were a fun duo of "Hawaiian Punch".

The October Social was a fun event for all members to reconnect and hang out together. Some members haven't seen each other since Pre-Service Training so having a monthly social is an excellent way for people to gather together and share what's been going on with their service.



Member Highlights

By: Robert Hsu



“Although I have only been at my site for a few weeks, I have already been exposed to so many new and eye-opening situations. Having the opportunity to work at a clinic that serves an underprivileged population has provided me with the chance to improve my cultural competency and gain a deeper understanding of what it’s like to live in poverty.”

For many of us, joining AmeriCorps North Florida Health Corps is an eye-opening experience. Becky Kant is an AmeriCorps member in charge of the Patient Assistance Program at the downtown Sulzbacher Clinic. The Patient Assistance Program is used to get free medications for low-income and uninsured patients who may not be able to afford them on their own. The Sulzbacher Clinic provides treatments and medication to promote the well-being of our patients who would otherwise have nowhere to go. Becky loves “having so much responsibility and knowing that [her] actions are leading to thousands of dollars in free medications for patients who would otherwise not be able to afford them.”

Becky graduated recently from the University of Notre Dame majoring in pre-med and psychology. Becky joined the North Florida Health Corps because she’s “always wanted the opportunity to commit to a long-term service project through which I could make substantial changes.” Becky plans on attending medical school next year, and joining the North Florida Health Corps gives her the chance to combine her aspirations to service along with her interest in the field of medicine. Becky’s favorite aspect of North Florida Health Corps has been meeting and getting to know the other members. Her most incredible experience was the teambuilding experience at the start of the year. So as Becky herself likes to say, “Come as you are. There is no better way.”

“The biggest challenge I have faced is trying to link clients with services even though I am new to Jacksonville and don’t know all of the services that are here.”

While many members this year face challenges adjusting to a new city and a new way of life, Erika Abraham, faces an even greater challenge as an AmeriCorps member for River Region Human Services along with Robert Hsu. As an AmeriCorps member, Erika receives referrals and meets with clients in order to link them to services in the community they might need such as housing, employment, medical, and financial assistance. At River Region, Erika serves a lower-income population that has had or currently has a substance abuse addiction. Specifically, Erika serves Methadone Treatment clients. Erika most enjoys “knowing that [she] will be able to speak to clients about their needs and hopefully linking them to services that they might need.” Erika also enjoys interacting with counselors and other staff members and learning from them.

Erika is from Granville, Ohio, and graduated in May 2010 with a B.A. in Psychology from West Virginia University. Erika joined AmeriCorps North Florida Health Corps because it “seemed like the perfect opportunity to gain valuable experience and to serve in a new place with a new and different population.” Erika likes to hang out friends, play sports, find new music, and watch college football and basketball. Erika hopes to attend graduate school to study mental health or school counseling. The biggest challenge to Erika in moving to Jacksonville has been that “it is bigger than any city that I have ever lived in.” But Erika has adjusted very quickly and enjoys being so close to beach. So as Erika herself says, “Such is life.”



Member Highlights Cont'd

"The relationships developing with my site's employees and clients helps give me something to look forward to every day."

For many of us North Florida Health Corps members, one of the biggest things with our host sites that always stands out to all of us is looking forward to directly serving our clients and building relationships with employees at the site. Cassie Wolfe serves at Wesconnett Nutrition Services as part of the environment serving the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Program. At her site, Cassie conducts nutrition education classes for monthly topics such as breakfast and does quick cooking demonstrations to show how to use WIC foods to make health meal choices. The population that Cassie serves consists of low income women, infants, and children of less than 5 years of age. Through



her experience so far, Cassie's perception of the population she serves has changed and she learned that even though she offers a service, "sometimes all someone needs for [her] to sit and listen."

Cassie is from Wisconsin and just recently graduated from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee majoring in Communication. Her dedication to service sparked her interest to join the North Florida Health Corps. Her biggest challenge coming to Jacksonville has been being far away from all her family. But she has enjoyed getting to explore a new area and community and developing relationships with a new group of people. A couple of her hobbies are playing soccer and baking pancakes. Her favorite quote is a quote from the movie *Garden State*, "If you can't laugh at yourself, life's gonna seem a lot longer than you'd like."

For Laughs...

Q: What do you call a witch that lives at the beach?
A: A sand-witch!

Q: Why did a ghost go into a bar?
A: For the Boo's!

Q: What instrument do skeletons play?
A: Trom-BONE

2010-2011 NFHC Members

Erika Abraham	River Region Human Services
Denise Adame	Beaches Family Health Center
Laurel Chadde	Brook's Family YMCA
Olivia Gibson	N.E. Florida Healthy Start Coalition
Kelsie Grabert	Pearl Nutrition Services
Amanda Hedemark	N.E. Florida Healthy Start Coalition
Caroline Hemeter	Johnson Family YMCA
Robert Hsu	River Region Human Services
Rebecca Kant	I.M. Sulzbacher Center
Suzziy Leonhard	The Arc Jacksonville
Tania Lugo	Reaching our Young Men Family Planning
Linda Maturino	Jacksonville Children's Commission
Bill McKenna	Jax Hats
Julia Muntean	I.M. Sulzbacher Center
Kelly Newton	I.M. Sulzbacher Center
Denae Phillips	The Arc Jacksonville
Britta Roach	Beaches Family Health Center
Cassie Sager	Clay County YMCA
Nicole Savage	Hubbard House
Emily Kay Smith	Baker County Health Department
Cassandra Tardiff	Medical Home for Homeless Children
Susan Thaxter	Emerald Tiger Nutrition Services
Cassie Wolfe	Wesconnett Nutrition Services

Newsletter Committee

Erika Abraham
Robert Hsu
Rebecca Kant
Denae Phillips
Cassie Wolfe

For More Information, Visit Our Website: <http://www.northfloridahealthcorps.org>