

INVESTING IN SOLUTIONS

MICHIGAN



COMMUNITY
SERVICE

COMMISSION

Service
as a
Strategy



Since its inception
in 1991, the
Michigan
Community
Service
Commission has:

Invested more than
\$100 million in
community
volunteer initiatives

Leveraged an
excess of **\$85
million** in local
funds

Enrolled **22,000**
Michigan's
AmeriCorps
members who
provided **26**
million hours of
service

Engaged more than
one million people
in volunteer service

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Dear Friends of Service,

Since the inception of the organization in 1991, the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) has been using service as a strategy to address some of Michigan's most pressing problems. In the past twenty years, we've invested more than \$100 million in communities for volunteer initiatives, which leveraged an excess of \$85 million in local funds, engaged more than one million people in volunteerism, and impacted critical issues such as disaster preparedness, education, foreclosure, healthcare, and the environment. We've shown that people who are willing to give their time and services to others truly can make a difference in our state.

With the generous support of Michigan's many volunteers, the mission for community change has been led in many ways over the years by our state's dedicated national service members. Across the state, more than 42,000 individuals annually commit their lives to national service through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, the Volunteer Generation Fund, and Learn and Serve - America. Though each in their own unique way, members of the national service family devote countless hours of results-driven service each year, which helps to meet local needs, strengthen communities, and increase civic engagement.

At the MCSC, two national service initiatives in particular have been central to our work in recent years: Michigan's AmeriCorps and the Volunteer Generation Fund. Since the creation of AmeriCorps in 1994, Michigan has been home to more than 22,000 Michigan's AmeriCorps members. These members have committed at least one year of their lives to supporting a nonprofit or public agency, and have given a collective 26 million hours of service. Though relatively new and only in its second year of existence, the Volunteer Generation Fund increases the capacity of volunteer connector organizations to recruit, manage, support, and retain individuals to serve in high quality volunteer assignments. Across Michigan, more than 76,000 citizens were engaged in this statewide effort in 2011, advancing a new era of volunteerism in which every day citizens combat our most complex issues with service.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of these national service programs in our 20th Anniversary year, we are proud to bring you these stories of impact which highlight the significant difference that service and volunteerism make all across our state. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to these national service members, and the volunteers who serve alongside them, for the positive change they create in our communities.

Looking towards the future, we know our many national service members and volunteers will continue to be instrumental in moving Michigan forward. We hope you will join us as we strive to reinvent Michigan, together.

Sincerely,



Paula Kaiser VanDam
Executive Director



Carolyn Bloodworth
Board Chair

Michigan Community Service Commission Signature Programs

As the state's lead agency on service and volunteerism, the Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) strives to build a culture of service throughout the state, as a means of combating some of Michigan's most difficult challenges. To do this, the MCSC administers five signature programs which help to address the diverse and various needs in Michigan communities.



Governor's Service Awards

Since 1994, the MCSC has been working with Michigan's Governor to pay tribute to outstanding volunteers across Michigan with the Governor's Service Awards. These volunteers demonstrate the power of giving and caring every day, and the Governor's Service Awards are one small way we can thank them for their commitment. Although volunteers don't expect accolades, we know volunteer recognition leads to volunteer retention, making the annual Governor's Service Awards an important tool for promoting and sustaining service in Michigan.

Learn and Serve - Michigan

The Learn and Serve - Michigan initiative was part of the Learn and Service America grant program supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Administered by the MCSC in partnership with the Michigan Department of Education, Learn and Serve - Michigan funded the development and implementation of high-quality, academic service-learning programs in K-12 schools. Following the elimination of the federal Learn and Serve America program in 2010, the MCSC was forced to cease the Learn and Serve - Michigan program at the end of 2011. However, service-learning remains an integral part of MCSC history and remains a critical service strategy in the VolunteerMICHIGAN initiative.



Mentor Michigan

Mentor Michigan provides crucial support and resources to nearly 250 organizations around the state that are changing lives by matching caring adult mentors with young people in need. Mentor Michigan supports these mentoring programs by providing training and research, as well as fostering partnerships to advance mentoring. In addition, Mentor Michigan works to ensure that every young person has a safe and beneficial mentoring experience by developing and promoting the use of quality program standards. The Mentor Michigan program also strives to build public awareness about the importance of and need for mentors.

Michigan's AmeriCorps

AmeriCorps is a national service program in which members provide intensive, results-driven service to thousands of individuals in need by dedicating a year of their lives to service. As AmeriCorps members, individuals serve with community and faith-based organizations, public agencies, and K-12 and higher education institutions in a variety of ways. In return for their service, members receive a modest living stipend, valuable work skills and training, and education support through the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. The Corporation for National and Community Service administers AmeriCorps at the federal level and partners with states to fund national service programs locally.



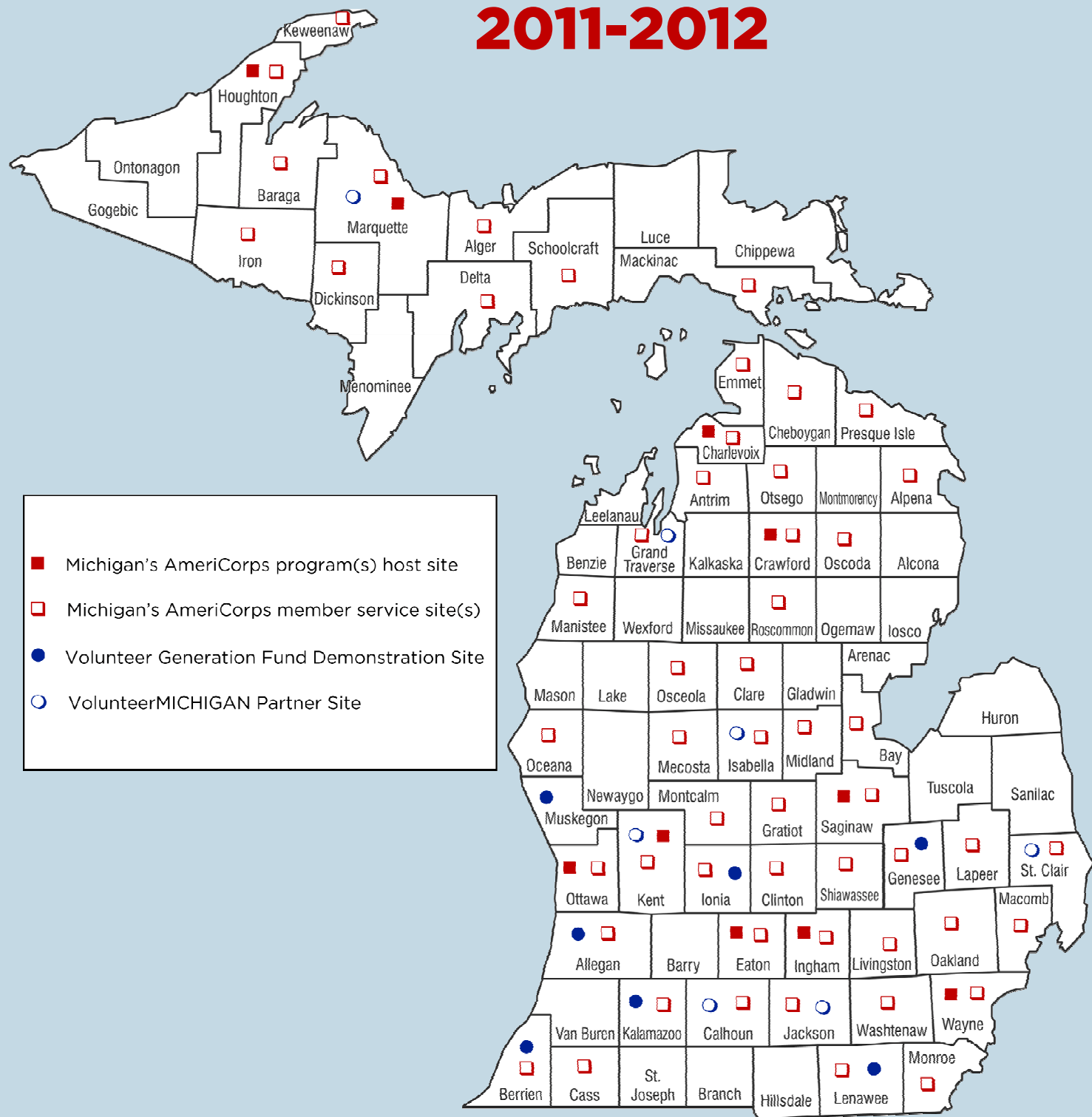
VolunteerMICHIGAN

The VolunteerMICHIGAN initiative encompasses a number of unique volunteer engagement strategies that seek to more effectively leverage Michigan's volunteers. VolunteerMICHIGAN is a direct result of the April 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and its goal of increasing volunteerism through strategies, including the Volunteer Generation Fund, administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. By commissioning a number of different volunteer recruitment and engagement tools, VolunteerMICHIGAN strives to tap each of the state's volunteer resources and ultimately increase the number of volunteers in Michigan.

In 2011-2012, the MCSC is funding 24 Michigan's AmeriCorps programs at more than 300 service sites. In addition, the MCSC is funding seven Volunteer Generation Fund demonstration grantees, with another seven sites partnering with VolunteerMICHIGAN efforts. Below is a map which denotes each county that has at least one Michigan's AmeriCorps, Volunteer Generation Fund, or VolunteerMICHIGAN service or host site. Many counties have more than one service site within its borders.

MCSC Funded Programs

2011-2012



- Michigan's AmeriCorps program(s) host site
- ◻ Michigan's AmeriCorps member service site(s)
- Volunteer Generation Fund Demonstration Site
- ◌ VolunteerMICHIGAN Partner Site

THE PUBLIC SAFETY CHALLENGE

Recent FBI crime rates indicate that Michigan is home to four of the nation's most violent cities - Flint, Detroit, Pontiac, and Saginaw. Outside of these four hot zones, other Michigan cities also see violent crimes rates well above the state-wide average of 4.9 per 1,000 residents. In addition to being bad for the health and well-being of the area's inhabitants, locations of increased danger are often destined for continued desolation as residents and businesses are unlikely to make investments of time or money in places where they feel their customers, property, and/or personal safety are at risk.

With little economic and community development requiring police protection, these despondent areas frequently offer reduced risk of detection and apprehension, and often become breeding grounds for crime and vandalism. This results in a vicious cycle where communities, and sometimes entire cities, encounter prolonged economic depression, high crime rates, and population loss.



THE SOLUTION

Through the implementation of a Neighborhood Watch Program, Wayne State University's AmeriCorps Urban Safety Program has been able to reduce crime and increase safety in Detroit's Midtown/North End District.



MAKING SAFER NEIGHBORHOODS

Wayne State University's AmeriCorps Midtown Urban Safety Program

With the hope of attracting educated and talented, young Detroiters that will ultimately rebuild and restore the dilapidated part of the city, the AmeriCorps Midtown Urban Safety Program at Wayne State University is part of a community effort to create safe and culturally rich neighborhoods in the Midtown District. While other partners work on important community features such as affordable and reliable transportation, the AmeriCorps Midtown Urban Safety program focuses on reducing crime rates. Through the dedicated service of fourteen AmeriCorps members and proven crime reduction techniques, the program is able to improve levels of neighborhood guardianship, reduce victim attractiveness and susceptibility, and increase the reporting and tracking of crime and suspicious activities.

To achieve the first two objectives, the program has leveraged sixty volunteers to serve through 34 "block clubs." These block clubs implement targeted strategies such as cleaning and boarding up vacant buildings, hosting crime prevention events, and establishing neighborhood patrols and watch groups. In addition, the AmeriCorps Midtown Urban Safety Program AmeriCorps members and block club participants disseminate educational materials that raise awareness about crime susceptibility through information packets, workshops, and presentations.

Lastly, the AmeriCorps Midtown Urban Safety Program provides training and support to Midtown community members to access and use the mobile broadband wireless network recently installed in their neighborhoods.

This wireless network, in conjunction with the 70 hardware and software systems installed on resident computers, enables mobile video surveillance by block club members and quick placement of video surveillance cameras that detect and record criminal activity in crime "hotspots."

Additionally, the wireless capacity has also equipped residents with the technology to take photographs or videos of suspicious activity and post them online for others to view, raising the awareness of crime in the neighborhood.

The Wayne State University AmeriCorps Midtown Urban Safety program has been hugely successful. After just one year of service in Detroit's Woodbridge neighborhood, overall crime has declined by 33 percent, including a 69 percent decline in street robbery, a 63 percent decline in drug dealing, and a 40 percent decline in vandalism. The program is replicating its successful strategies and expanding into the Henry Ford neighborhood of Detroit. In 2011-2012, the AmeriCorps program has already established nine new block clubs.

Volunteer Kalamazoo

Faced with crime rates nearly twice as high as the state average, many residents in the greater Kalamazoo community do not feel safe in their own neighborhoods. To combat this growing problem, the local volunteer center, Volunteer Kalamazoo, decided to enlist volunteers to support the efforts of the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, as well as other neighborhood associations working on the same issue. Needing a large number of volunteers with many diverse skills, the Michigan Community Service Commission provided Volunteer Kalamazoo with a small Volunteer Generation Fund grant that provided volunteer recruitment, management, and training resources. As a result of their increased capacity, coupled with the passionate and focused efforts of the center, Volunteer Kalamazoo was able to recruit nearly 1,600 volunteers in their first year, as well as 28 community partners. These volunteers and community collaborative members served with Volunteer Kalamazoo to clean up three different neighborhoods, paint over graffiti, trim overgrown bushes, and maintain an orderly physical environment in some of Kalamazoo's most troubled areas. Together, Volunteer Kalamazoo and its many partners, as well as the hundreds of volunteers, are restoring order and safety to the greater Kalamazoo community.



THE LITERACY CHALLENGE

From preschool to third grade, children are learning to read. In fourth grade and beyond, children are reading to learn, making literacy a crucial factor in the future success of a child. Without sufficient reading abilities, school becomes increasingly difficult for students, decreasing their likelihood of graduation and postsecondary education. These achievements are important not only to the child, but also to the world in which they live. A recent study reported that Michiganders without a high school diploma cost the local, state, and federal governments \$3,488 per year in taxes and institutional costs, while those with a college degree contributed \$17,604 more than they used in services. Reading failure is also linked to substance abuse, teen pregnancy, delinquency, and crime, making fundamental literacy skills even more critical to the development of a child and our state.

THE SOLUTION

By combining a family literacy component with both in-school and after-school tutoring, the Heart of West Michigan United Way Schools of Hope AmeriCorps program is able to improve the literacy skills of Grand Rapids area elementary students, preparing them for a lifetime of success.

ABC's FOR A LIFETIME

Schools of Hope AmeriCorps Program

Across Michigan, the issue of illiteracy affects 17 percent of fourth graders who are not reading at proficient standards as put forth in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. This devastating situation is compounded in the greater Grand Rapids area, where 37 percent of fourth graders are not reading at proficient levels. As these children progress through school, this problematic issue manifests into poor outcomes for many students; only 57.8 percent of Grand Rapids Public School students graduate, as compared to the statewide average of more than 70 percent.

To address the issue of illiteracy, the Heart of West Michigan United Way Schools of Hope AmeriCorps program utilizes 15 full-time AmeriCorps members in a three-tiered program approach at 15 different elementary school sites. Children in these schools are in grades 1-3 and already face a number of deterring socio-economic factors, as many of their parents have limited English-speaking skills and 90 percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The first part of the three-pronged program is to address family literacy. In partnership with the Literacy Center of West Michigan, the Schools of Hope Family Literacy Program covers four literacy components: parent education, parenting workshops, child education, and parent and child together time. Parents in need of literacy training or English as a second language are recruited from participating elementary schools. An independent plan for each parent is then developed, based on their ultimate goal of education or employment. However, in each scenario emphasis is placed on helping parents to better help their children.

In 2010-2011, the Family Literacy Program impacted more than 60 families, with 82 percent of English as a second language parents showing a significant gain in English listening or reading tests. The Family Literacy Program is an important piece of breaking the illiteracy cycle, as it increases the capacity of parents to compete more effectively in the workplace, as well as their capacity to support their children. In fact, students whose parents were enrolled in Family Literacy classes improved their standardized test scores at a 53.5 percent higher rate than their peers in similar groups.

The second and third key components of the Schools of Hope AmeriCorps program are in-school and after-school tutoring for students. In-school literacy tutoring targets students in first through third grade who are slightly behind in reading. After-school literacy tutoring targets students in the same grade who are even further behind in their reading. Together, these two programs provided tutoring to more than 700 students in 2010 - 2011, with students showing an average of 1.24 years of growth in their reading scores.

To achieve this significant reach, the 15 Schools of Hope AmeriCorps members recruit hundreds of Grand Rapids area community members to serve alongside them as volunteer tutors. The Schools of Hope AmeriCorps members then teach these volunteers how to properly tutor students. AmeriCorps members also cover important topics such as how to engage uninterested students and to handle learning diversity. By acting as literacy teachers and coordinators, these AmeriCorps members can leverage their limited resources to reach additional children and impact additional lives. As a result, they help to place nearly 1,000 children on the path to reading success, which ultimately paves the way for a successful future.

THE DROPOUT CHALLENGE

Across the United States, more than one million high school students drop out of high school every year. Without basic reading and math skills, these individuals are unequipped for employment in the constantly evolving global workforce, and find themselves earning a yearly salary three times lower than those with high school diplomas. In addition, high school dropouts have a 15.4 percent unemployment rate and are eight times more likely to go to prison or need public welfare. In Detroit's metropolitan area, the drop out challenge is nearing epidemic status; only 38 percent of Detroit students achieve high school graduation, a number far short of the 71 percent national average. In fact, 41 of the district's 190 schools graduate less than 60 percent of their freshmen on time and are considered "drop out factories." In an effort to detect youth at risk of dropping out, three key distress signals have been identified: failing either math or English; attending school less than 80 percent of the time; and receiving a low final grade in behavior.

THE SOLUTION

City Year Detroit's team-based AmeriCorps program provides targeted and school-wide interventions in literacy, math, attendance, and behavior to help identify students at-risk of dropping out before graduation and help them to stay on track.



FROM DROPOUTS TO DREAMS

City Year Detroit AmeriCorps Program

In ten of Detroit's most problematic schools, a team of City Year Detroit AmeriCorps members spend nearly every day amongst the city's middle and high school aged students. For one entire school year, these AmeriCorps members work with both teachers and administrators to support students who show early warning signs of dropping out. By implementing a series of research based intervention strategies, which include literacy and math tutoring, whole-class academic support, attendance and behavior coaching, and enrichment programming, City Year Detroit AmeriCorps members are strengthening student achievement and engagement, and combatting drop-out triggers.

In the 2009-2010 school year, City Year Detroit AmeriCorps members provided one-on-one and small group tutoring to more than 450 students. As a result, 77 percent of those students increased their academic performance by at least one test level. In addition, 91 percent of teachers in the program reported that their students had an improved attitude towards learning.

While academic support is a critical element of City Year Detroit's proven strategy, it is just one piece of the puzzle. City Year Detroit AmeriCorps members also provide coaching and activities that reinforce positive behavior and improved attendance, such as morning greetings, attendance checks, and mentoring activities. By administering targeted and consistent support, City Year Detroit AmeriCorps members helped 213 students improve their class attendance rate to more than 90 percent. Moreover, 100 percent of students that received behavior coaching showed a decrease in referrals to the office.

While the statistics and numbers are impressive, one only needs to hear a member story to understand the true impact of a City Year Detroit AmeriCorps member's service. "When I started working with Ashante's sixth grade class, his reading level was just barely that of a third grader's," explained Skye Black, a City Year Detroit AmeriCorps member in 2010-2011. "My initial encounters with him were usually spent trying to calm his frustrations as he watched himself rapidly fall behind the entire class. I made a point to read with Ashante every day.

"After about four months, it was time to re-test the student's reading comprehension levels. Although Ashante's teacher and I had seen massive improvements, we were both anxious to see the data. In just five short months, Ashante had increased his reading score by a year and five months, putting him at almost a fifth grade reading level. I have no doubt in my mind that Ashante will never again face falling through the cracks of our flawed educational system - he has reached a turning point in his life thanks to City Year."

Throughout the Detroit Public School system, there are stories just like Ashante's; students who weren't good at school and acted out as a result. Without any extra attention, many of these students are likely to fall through the cracks - never to see their graduation day. However, by targeting the early warning signs, City Year Detroit AmeriCorps members provide the time, patience, and assistance needed to bring these students back on track to a future as bright as Ashante's.

Mentor Michigan College Coaching Corps

One-on-one mentoring has long been known to provide significant benefits to troubled youth. In addition to higher rates of future employment and reduced presence of problem behavior, one of the benefits of mentoring includes higher educational attainment and an increased desire to complete high school. To expand on and escalate this educational motivation, the Mentor Michigan College Coaching Corps AmeriCorps program has placed AmeriCorps members across the state to increase the capacity of mentoring programs and provide college-positive resources to mentors.

These members not only help to make mentor/mentee matches, but they also disseminate age-appropriate resources that help youth to plan and prepare for postsecondary education. The Mentor Michigan College Coaching Corps AmeriCorps program also raises awareness of postsecondary education options in K12 schools systems by mobilizing "College Positive Volunteers" to serve with youth, and by developing community partnerships with organizations such as the Michigan College Access Network. As a result of this two-pronged approach, Mentor Michigan College Coaching Corps helped place nearly 1,200 Michigan youth on the pathway to postsecondary education in 2011.

THE HEALTH CARE CHALLENGE

Throughout Michigan, more than 1.2 million, or 13 percent of Michigan's residents, are uninsured. Low-income individuals in particular make up a disproportionate percentage of the uninsured, with more than 40 percent having incomes below the federal poverty level. Faced with the high cost of medical bills, uninsured individuals are more than twice as likely to forgo medical attention than those with insurance. By delaying or forgoing needed care, what was once a treatable condition can become a serious health problem. As a result, uninsured individuals are more likely to be hospitalized for avoidable conditions and uninsured cancer patients are diagnosed later and die earlier compared to those with insurance. Additionally, populations without insurance are less likely to receive preventive care, an especially risky situation for children who rely on well-child appointments to diagnose special health needs and obtain important immunizations.



THE SOLUTION

By convening a Volunteer Medical Corps willing to provide pro-bono services, a series of free health clinics are offered to Allegan County uninsured, underinsured, and transient populations.

TREATING THE UNINSURED

Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center Volunteer Medical Corps

As a largely rural area with high agricultural activity, Allegan County is faced with a high number of low-income and migrant populations that have little to no access to health care. Confronted with the growing community need for affordable health services, the Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center had a dream of creating a permanent free health clinic. To reach this goal, they recruited and organized a Volunteer Medical Corps, a strong team of skilled volunteers that includes doctors, physician assistants, nurses, dentists, and specialty providers. As a result of this dedicated team of professionals, the Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center is able to host a series of free health clinics to treat the uninsured and underinsured residents of Allegan County.

At their first free clinic day, the Volunteer Medical Corps served more than 30 patients. One family arrived with two children sick with strep throat, an undiagnosed diabetic mother, and a father with pneumonia. In a matter of hours, the children were prescribed and given the appropriate medicine, and both parents' health issues were addressed and stabilized, with follow-up and maintenance plans made to improve their future health. These four individuals were a migrant family that would otherwise not have received any medical attention until things were progressively worse, if at all. A few months later, the Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center hosted their second free clinic day, with nearly 40 patients receiving care. At both of these clinics, more than 450 volunteer hours were donated by highly-skilled members of the Volunteer Medical Corps, as well as others.

In addition to convening the Volunteer Medical Corps, the Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center has built a strong collaborative of sixteen community partners that work together to address the ongoing health care challenge in their county. This community collaborative includes the Allegan General Hospital, Allegan County Community Mental Health, Michigan State University Extension, Allegan County Health Department, and many more. Aside from the assistance available within the partnership, this collaborative has also been able to work with pharmaceutical and medical supply companies to get medicine and supplies donated as needed. As awareness of the free clinics grows, as well as the number of patients, this support will prove to be instrumental. In 2012, the group plans to hold another two large clinics, as well as monthly outreach clinics with regular clinic hours where patients can receive follow-up care.

The success of the Allegan County Volunteer Medical Corps can be attributed in part to the support of a small Volunteer Generation Fund grant awarded by the Michigan Community Service Commission. This grant provided the Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center with a series of volunteer engagement strategies and capacity building training that has proven beneficial to recruiting and managing both volunteers and partners for their mission. In the first year of the grant, the Allegan County United Way and Volunteer Center recruited a total of 243 new volunteers, 59 of which were highly-skilled. As a result of this increased volunteer activity and effectiveness, the Allegan County Volunteer Medical Corps and community collaborative are creating systemic change to address the Allegan County health care challenge.

Michigan Primary Care Association's Community Health Corps

With the number of uninsured and underinsured throughout the state on the rise, many Michigan health centers are beginning to feel the strain. To help increase their capacity and build a strong support system for those who need assistance, the Michigan Primary Care Association has enlisted the help of 18 full-time Michigan's AmeriCorps members which make up the Michigan Primary Care Association's Community Health Corps. These members help health centers to maintain contact with individual patients, provide enrollment assistance to patients into eligible programs, provide prescription assistance, help low-income patients navigate complex applications for reduced-cost pharmaceuticals, coordinate transportation, and provide other supportive services. In 2010-2011, the Community Health Corps helped more than 8,500 individuals enroll in health insurance, health services, and health benefits. They also provided assessment support to nearly 13,000 individuals, referred 998 individuals to additional services, and provided interpretative support to 442 individuals. In total, the Michigan Primary Care Association's Community Health Corps served nearly 27,000 Michigan residents in need.

THE HOUSING CHALLENGE

With unemployment numbers and the financial recession wreaking havoc on the state's economy, Michigan is in great need of stable and affordable housing. In 2011, one in every 417 households experienced a home foreclosure, leaving the Michigan State Housing Development Authority with more than 7,000 families statewide on a wait-list for affordable housing. This lack of decent and affordable housing has led to an all-time record high in the Michigan homeless population. Of the 100,176 estimated Michigan homeless, more than 25 percent are predicted to be families experiencing homelessness for the first time. A tight housing market has also greatly affected people who need to move to better housing structures and can't find adequate facilities within their income range.



THE SOLUTION

Michigan Habitat's AmeriCorps Program, administered by the Habitat for Humanity of Michigan, provides volunteer coordination, construction support, outreach, and family assistance to help increase the number of homes built in the state, as well as the number of Michigan families placed into homes.



CREATING HOMES AND HOPE

Habitat for Humanity of Michigan – Michigan Habitat’s AmeriCorps Program

With 79 affiliates across the state, Habitat for Humanity of Michigan has an annual goal of producing 500 homes per year. Their unique program does not build homes for people, but rather *with* people, as they require that the new homeowner works alongside the volunteers as the home is constructed. The low-income families chosen for Habitat for Humanity housing are also provided with credit counseling, financial management training, and continuous support throughout the life of their 20-year, interest free mortgage.

To help build the capacity of their affiliates and the sustainability of their home owners, Habitat for Humanity of Michigan relies on the support of 13 Michigan’s AmeriCorps members who provide volunteer coordination, construction technical support, outreach, family service assistance, and neighborhood development project support. Specifically, the Michigan Habitat’s AmeriCorps Program members focus on four priority areas: finding qualified families and improving their credit, constructing quality, energy-efficient structures, mobilizing volunteers, and working with community coalitions to create better living conditions in neighborhoods.

As a result of the Michigan Habitat’s AmeriCorps member service, 4,800 new volunteers were supervised at Habitat for Humanity of Michigan affiliate sites throughout the state. These volunteers dedicated a total of 44,600 service hours, helping to construct 14 new homes. In addition to monitoring volunteer operations, the members also worked to increase volunteer satisfaction, which helps to retain trained volunteers and ensure they return to serve again.

While some members were busy on the construction site, other Michigan Habitat’s AmeriCorps members were providing financial training to more than 800 Habitat homeowners. These members also helped 366 new families fill out applications, assisted 76 families through the selection process, and monitored the sweat equity hours of 58 families. Additionally, Michigan Habitat’s AmeriCorps members also coordinated various neighborhood improvement projects across the state, which ranged from minor home repairs and weatherization to major home repairs and block revitalization.

As the housing crisis continues to impact families and communities across Michigan, the work of Habitat for Humanity of Michigan will continue to be crucially important. By increasing the capacity of the organization, as well as its sustainability, Michigan Habitat’s AmeriCorps members are playing a critical role in ensuring all Michigan residents have access to one of life’s basic necessities: shelter.

Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness AmeriCorps Program

Due to increasing budget constraints, a number of government-provided social services have been diminished or eliminated in recent years. As a result, many community members, including the growing number of Michigan homeless, have turned to local nonprofit agencies to find much needed assistance. This influx of homeless individuals and families has been met by the trained and caring assistance of the Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness AmeriCorps program. Comprised of 20 full-time AmeriCorps members, the Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness AmeriCorps program is coordinated by the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness. These members performed outreach activities and assisted 1,683 individuals experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness to assess barriers to housing, develop strategic plans, and identify housing opportunities. In addition, the members recruit volunteers to provide services to the homeless and act as a liaison as individuals transition out of homelessness.

Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness AmeriCorps members make a difference each day by helping homeless individuals to lead safe, secure, and self-sufficient lives. To illustrate the impact, AmeriCorps member Amy Popoff shares this story. “Andrew, who has a disability, had been homeless for several years. He was staying at an emergency shelter when he was made aware of and applied for a tenant based rental assistance housing voucher. After being accepted into the program in March of 2010, Andrew began to undergo intensive case management, long-range planning, and housing stabilization efforts through the Campaign to End Homelessness. Andrew has now been successfully housed for over one year and is becoming a better advocate for himself and his disability. He also keeps his apartment clean and organized and is able to look forward and see a future for himself.”

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that Michigan has been hard hit in recent years. Faced with growing community need and shrinking budgets, an alternate solution to the state's unique challenges is both increasingly necessary and important. The Michigan Community Service Commission thoroughly believes that national service programs like AmeriCorps and the Volunteer Generation Fund are a cost-effective and proven strategy to address these growing community issues. Through the dedicated support of national service members and generous community volunteers, these programs provide a powerful capital return: benefiting the people who serve, those who are served, and the larger society and state. The stories of national service impact shared here are just a few of many examples that illustrate how a small national service investment can be a foundation for change and a lasting community solution.

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