Future of AmeriCorps Looks Bright
By Rebecca White, Program Director

With a 20% increase in funds for next year passed by Congress, and an additional 9% increase proposed for the following year by President Bush, the future of AmeriCorps looks promising. Translation to the ABC Literacy Program is that we anticipate being back up to 100% next school year, and maybe even more. After this year’s 47% cut, that is good news indeed.

In order to insure the survivability of the program and cover the full needs of the schools and communities, a few changes are being implemented. The biggest change is the transition to all part-time and quarter-time members serving for ten months, ending in May. Only those current members that want to come back for a second year and want to serve full time will be allowed to have full-time positions. The living allowance for that position will be $10,200. All new members will be put into part-time or quarter-time positions.

So that the ABC Literacy Program can fulfill the obligation to some summer programs, there is the possibility that a few minimum-time members will serve 30 hours per week for 10 weeks over the summer with the Summer Youth Programs, TAZ, Teen Turf, and summer school.

The information for each of the less-than-full-time member options is as follows:

Service Options for Members

- **Part-time member** – Serve about 25 hours per week in the classroom or sponsoring site, and in training and service projects until May 31; receive a living allowance of $5,400, plus an education award of $2,362 at the end of the service term; a minimum of 900 total hours of service in the school and community is required.

- **Quarter-time member** – Serve about 13 hours per week in the classroom or sponsoring site, and in training and service projects until May 15; receive a living allowance of $2,700, plus an education award of $1,250 at the end of the service term; a minimum of 450 total hours of service in the school and community is required.

- **Quarter-time Work-study member** – Must be eligible for at least 450 hours of work-study at SVCC over two semesters and registered for 6 credit hours of regular SVCC classes per semester. Serve about 13 hours per week in the classroom or sponsoring site, and in training and service projects until May 15; receive college work study wages of $6.50 (approximate) per hour, plus an education award of $1,250 at the end of the service term; 450 total hours of service in the school and community is required.

Possible future service option:

- **Minimum-time member** – Serve about 30 hours per week in kids’ summer programs in the community and in training from May 17 through July 31; receive a living allowance of $1,800, plus an education award of $1,000 at the end of the service term; a minimum of 300 hours of service in the school and community is required.

With the increase in the number of members, the ABC Literacy Program will be looking to restore sites that were not able to be served with this year’s cutbacks, as well as bringing on new sites to cover more needs of children and the communities. Those individuals interested in becoming an AmeriCorps member, and those not-for-profit agencies, schools and child care centers who would like to be a sponsoring site, should call me at 288-5511 x313 for more information. The next program year starts August 2, 2004. Here we GROW again!
If you ever have been in a disaster you have probably seen the American Red Cross helping people. Or maybe they even helped you. The Red Cross has many volunteers. One way they train volunteers is by working with programs such as the AmeriCorps program. Recently the AmeriCorps members of Sauk Valley Community College were trained by the Red Cross to be able to respond if there is ever a mass disaster in our area.

The Red Cross provides many services in a disaster among which are getting medical attention to those in need, as well as shelter, food, comfort kits that have the necessary toiletries, and referrals for other assistance. In a disaster the Red Cross also goes out in mobile vehicles to take assistance to those who may have chosen to stay at their home or could not make it to the shelters.

This assistance is not just for the major disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and attacks on our homeland. The Red Cross is also there to help families that are affected by house fires and floods. Sometimes it is just one family they are there to help. The Red Cross always stays or follows up until they are sure the family or families are settled and have all their basic needs met.

The Red Cross also trains those people interested in becoming a volunteer in other areas. Volunteers are needed not just in cases of disasters but also for the blood mobile which takes donations of blood to help those who are in need of it for transfusions during surgeries.

As you can see the Red Cross provides many services, and assists the community when it is in need. For this reason the Red Cross is always in need of donations and more volunteers. So contact your local American Red Cross chapter today if you would like to become a volunteer.

In the past few months AmeriCorps members have been getting things done. Service is what we do best and that is just what we have done. Our members have been showing up where we have been needed. Whether it is to paint faces for Sights and Sounds at the LIFE book program table at the mall in Sterling, or passing out programs for the children’s production of the Nutcracker at SVCC in Dixon during December, or even giving out environmental information to passersby at the recent Bald Eagle Days in Rock Island, AmeriCorps members have been there.

We will continue to go where we are needed. We are AmeriCorps, and we get things done.

In past years the AmeriCorps program has worked with Teen Action Zone and provided an educational fun day for kids to learn about Martin Luther King Jr., teaching children that the differences in people such as their skin color are not important. This year the plan was changed a little. TAZ took a field trip and many other AmeriCorps members did special projects within our schools.

My class took the day of Friday the 16th to discuss Martin Luther King Jr. We watched a video and then students wrote papers about what they had learned about him. The students did an amazing job. The teacher and I plan on making copies of the students’ papers and put them into a mini book for the parents to see. The following week we studied Harriet Tubman and other famous African Americans in history. My class has shown a real passion for learning about how the things that happened in the past have paved the way for our future. “By learning about the past we can keep from making similar mistakes.” This is a quote from a third grader after reading about the life of Martin Luther King Jr.

In AmeriCorps we participate in many different volunteer activities. One of the activities I recently assisted in is the sixth grade dance at Westwood Sports Complex in Sterling on January 15th. AmeriCorps members Davia, Jessie, Sharon, Trudy, Tiffany, and myself all helped the parents and the Sterling police department chaperone the dance.

Sixth graders from Challand Middle School in Sterling and Rock Falls Middle School were invited to attend the event. However, those with disciplinary infractions were not allowed to participate. This makes attending the dance an incentive for good behavior while students are in school.

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The AmeriCorps members have many roles in helping with the dance. They check-in the students at the door, walk around the dance and discourage any horseplay. Sometimes members find themselves helping a youth that is having problems with others.

The event had a Disc Jockey who played common party songs from the 70’s through the millennium. The students also got to enjoy interactive activities like “The Chicken-Dance” and a “Grease” sing-off in which some of the AmeriCorps members had to indulge.

All and all, the night was a success. When the students left at 8 o’clock the relieved AmeriCorps members stayed to help with the clean up. The assistance from AmeriCorps members is very important to this program and others. In the process of volunteering with these programs the members can also enjoy themselves.


Unity at TAZ
By Maggie Hurley

In celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day the kids and staff of TAZ took a trip to LOMC. LOMC is a Lutheran Sponsored conference center or camp where groups participate in team building activities that promote trust. We broadened this to the theme of trusting others no matter the differences he or she has.

Despite the 14-degree weather, the kids still participated in outside activities. Some of these included the teeter-totter balance, the ball maze, and many others. Everyone seemed to really enjoy themselves. However, the wind and bitter cold were unbearable and after a vote we decided to go roller-skating at White Pines Roller Rink.

This change of plans saved the day. It gave the kids the opportunity to “run around” and all seemed to enjoy it. By the end of the day a slight change had occurred in the attitudes of the kids. Arguing and fighting had ceased. Everyone seemed to be having a great time. It’s hard to tell if the message will sink in, but all in all I feel the day was a success.


Book Review
By: Kathy Raymond

Title: The Great Kapok Tree
Author: Lynne Cherry

When I recently asked my sight librarian to recommend a children’s book she immediately suggested I read, The Great Kapok Tree, A tale of the Amazon Rain Forest, written by Lynne Cherry. This is a story children will enjoy reading or to be read. It is full of colorful pictures. It tells an interesting make believe story and leaves an important message.

The great kapok tree is found in the Amazon Rain Forest. It is a home to many. The story begins with a young man. He is asked to cut down a kapok tree in the forest, but as he finds out it is hard to do such a task. So he decides to rest and when he does he then learns things from the animals that shows this tree is important. In the end he does not cut it down, this tree and its inhabitants have helped save a little of our future.

The lesson this story gives us is an important one. As children read it hopefully they come away understanding how our actions do affect the lives others. This is an award-winning book. Enjoy!

Book: Piggie Pie!
Author: Margie Palatini
Illustrated by: Howard Fine

This is a cute story about the adventures of one grumpy, grouchy, hungry witch trying to find her Piggie Pie. It’s an interesting spin on the Old MacDonald tale using pigs.

I read it to a group of second grade students who thoroughly enjoyed it. By the end of the story the children were filling in the dialogue as I read along. This is definitely a tale for young children K-2.

The story involves what happens to a very hungry witch who wants to find the ingredients for a Piggie Pie. What happens to her in this search is quite funny and children can easily pick up on what is happening by following the pictures of the story as well as what is read. If you enjoyed the story of Old MacDonald and his farm you will enjoy Piggie Pie.


Member Spotlights
By: Faith Stambaugh

Lena Alba is a first year member. She was born on March 31, 1977. Lena is not married and does not have any children yet. Her favorite type of food to eat is Thai food and she loves to play Clue and Scattergories because they are like a mystery that makes her brain work on a timer. Lena likes to listen to all types of music except Pop Country. She loves to celebrate New Years because it is the start of a new year and beginning. If Lena could meet one person, dead or alive, she says it would have to be Paul McCartney because he was the cutest Beatle and because he is awesome. The most important thing in her live is her family and friends.
Another member of our team is Davia Marie Merced. Davia is one of our great team leaders and a second year member. She has no children but she lives with her mom, brother, birdie and her fish. She hopes that soon she will also be able to include a dog into her life as well. Davia was born on August 23, 1978. Her favorite food is cheese and onion enchiladas. Davia’s favorite holiday is Halloween because she loves scary things, costumes, candy, and fall. If she could meet any person, dead or alive, it would have to be John Lennon because he gives peace a chance. Davia’s most important thing in her life is her music, albums, her birdie, family, and her boyfriend.

Frances Clark is also one of our team leaders. Her birthday is on March 9th. Frances has a husband and two boys who are 13 and 11. She loves chips and dip. Frances also loves to play Dominos. She says it is something she learned and now her family and friends attend tournaments and they have a great quality team. Frances likes to listen to well sung jazz music with great harmonies. Her favorite holiday is Halloween because it is so visual and everyone has fun for the day. If Frances could have any job in the world it would be that she is able to be self-employed so that she could balance work and have life without guilt. The most important thing in Frances’ life is her faith, family, and friends.

Finally, the last but not least member profiled in this issue is Daniel William Aiston. Dan was born on June 16, 1984. Dan’s family consists of two brothers, Patrick (21) and Kellen (16), his mom Jill and his dad Chris. He likes to eat almost all pastas and his mom’s green bean casserole. Dan likes to play Monopoly because he is very good at getting good deals in trades. His favorite type of music is Hip-Hop. Dan likes to celebrate Christmas because he loves to get presents. If Dan could have any job in the world it would be something in music, like an artist or executive. Finally the most important thing in Dan’s life is his family and enjoying whatever he is doing.

There are a few more of our members in the ABC Literacy Program. In every issue you will learn a little bit more about a few more members. We love our kids and we love our commitment because we are getting things done!!

AmeriCorps Benefits Children (ABC) Literacy Program is a venture, sponsored by Sauk Valley Community College, whose mission is to help raise the reading levels of children in local schools, and promote volunteerism within the community. If interested, call Rebecca White at 815-288-5511 ext 313, or email whiter@svcc.edu

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