

## **An AmeriCorps Member Great Story: December, 2009**

So far my experience in AmeriCorps has been incredible. My placement, as a high school math tutor in Hillsboro, has proven to be everything that I was looking for when I first became interested in AmeriCorps. At first I was not sure of what to expect as I found the program really late and was just barely accepted for my placement at the last possible moment. I had a general idea that I wanted to work somewhere in education, as my future plans are to go into teaching, but I was not sure how I would fare as a math tutor considering my expertise is in the social studies realm. I was definitely intrigued and excited from the beginning, but to say that I was a little bit nervous would be a considerable understatement.

From the moment that I began working with the students here at Century High School the nervousness melted away and formed into a level of passion and engagement that I don't believe that I had previously ever experienced. I find myself challenged on a daily basis, but not once have I even come close to growing frustrated. The opportunities that I have had to help the students engage their school work and to provide mentoring have affected me in ways that words could hardly do justice. There have been times where a period will end or the day will come to a close and I will literally express out loud how much I love this work. While certainly not every time that I sit down with a student can be considered an ultimate success, as I am still learning and making mistakes, there are just so many moments where I can not only see that I am making a difference, but I can feel it. Whether it is a student showing that they can apply conquer math problems that we have been working on all by themselves or a student very sincerely expressing how much I have helped them, I am constantly reminded of the importance and legitimacy of the work that I am doing. However much I value the difference that I am able to make in this work, this is not the only reason for my satisfaction with the experience.

While I am right out of college, I have considerably more life and work experience behind me than your average college graduate and this plays a great factor in why I am enjoying this work so much. Before entering this AmeriCorps placement and certainly before deciding to devote my life to education I had led a fairly selfish life. At the time I certainly didn't recognize it as such, but everything I did fit into the category of things that would advance my own life and agenda and little attention was paid to the relevance of my choices and work towards society as a whole. The thing about that kind of life, however, is there really is very little satisfaction that comes from it. At about age 26 I began to recognize how unsatisfied (not to mention unhappy) I was and decided to go back to school and refocus my life. With school finished I decided to continue this trend and commit myself to something that is bigger and more important than my own personal interests and that is what led me here. I can honestly say that right now in this work I am happier and more satisfied than I have ever been in my life. The ability to have an effect that resonates larger than my own personal bubble has certainly played a key role in this satisfaction and it shows that no matter how much one focuses on trying to meet their own needs they can still be incredibly empty and wanting.

I have also found my mind engaged on a level, outside of college, that I have never experienced and this is another key component to the satisfaction that I feel with this work. I have previously worked an almost ten year career in banking and what that showed me was the importance of engagement in one's work. Work full of monotony mixed with stress had a certainly debilitating affect on my own attitude and happiness. My mind was almost not engaged in that work at all and it was source of unhappiness that I did not even recognized till it was rectified in college. Now in this work I have experienced work that I actually enjoy and that I come into excited and leave excited every day. This has proven invaluable to me. My mind is engaged not only with the academics that I engage in the school, but with the challenge of working with teenage students and coming up with affective tutoring techniques and philosophy.

I, frankly, cannot overstate the impact that this work has had on me in the short time that I have been doing it. I am still learning and making mistakes, but it is difficult to imagine myself being any happier or more satisfied.

I hope that works. Sorry it is so long, but I have a lot of feelings here and felt like it was a good opportunity to express them. Once again let me know if there is anything else that you need.