



AmeriCorps VISTA

Spokane County United Way manages the selection and support of AmeriCorps VISTA projects and members in Spokane County in coordination with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Currently we host a VISTA Leader, 14 projects and the Summer Associates program in our community. By supporting VISTA projects, we strengthen local programs that align with our vision for a more educated, healthier and prosperous community.

Benefits of AmeriCorps VISTA

For Individuals

In their year of service VISTA members:

- Serve full-time to build capacity in local organizations
- Increase marketable skills and experience
- Earn a valuable education award

For Local Nonprofits

- Develop new programs to respond to emerging community needs
- Improve capacity of existing programs
- Increase access to financial resources and program volunteers
- Receive assistance (FTE position) for 3 years to address defined needs

For Our Community

- Connects people and programs to each other
- Focuses resources on the most marginalized
- Creates visible and long-lasting change

Recently Completed Project Highlights

A VISTA project helped launch **The Kitchen at Second Harvest**, which gives people the tools to take their health into their own hands through nutrition education and hands-on cooking lessons. Volunteers lead delivery of cooking, nutrition, food budgeting and food safety and sanitation messages with community members living with low incomes or experiencing food insecurity. Last year, volunteers donated 1,400 hours to Nutrition Education.

SNAP Financial Access, which provides access to financial education and financial services for low-moderate income households, had its start as a VISTA project in 2005. With an annual budget that exceeds \$3,000,000, it provides pathways to housing stability and economic opportunity for thousands of people every year.

The free tax site at **Spokane County United Way** was started by a VISTA member in 2011. It now uses almost 100 community volunteers to prepare taxes for more than 800 low-income households annually, returning over \$1.2 million to these households in refunds and credits.

The foundation for **Volunteer Spokane**, an online portal for finding and connecting people to volunteer opportunities, started as a VISTA project. In 2018, there were 2,522 responses to opportunities posted by over 350 nonprofits on volunteerspokane.org.



Current Projects, July 2019

Education

- **Excelerate Success, VISTA Summer Associates:** VISTA Summer Associates increase capacity at summer meal sites by coordinating drop-in programs for youth including STEM, literacy, art and recreation activities. In summer 2018, Spark Central, Spokane County Library District, Spokane Parks and Recreation, Spokane Public Library, The Zone Project, and West Central Community Center hosted a total of 13 Summer Associates at 19 locations countywide.
- **Greater Spokane, Inc., Greater Minds Initiative:** Expanding outreach, so more people can receive supports to return to school and complete their degree or certificate.
- **Northeast Community Center, The Zone Project:** Developing multi-partner initiatives that grow opportunity for low-income youth in Northeast Spokane.
- **Salish School of Spokane:** Building capacity to provide Salish language education in a culturally authentic learning community.
- **Spark Central:** Adapting Spark Central creative and tech programs and resources to serve the West Central neighborhood more intentionally.

Financial Stability

- **Liberty Park Community Development Center, English Language Program:** Creating programs and resources so refugees can help themselves and their children move from poverty to self-sufficiency.
- **River City Youth Ops:** Developing resources to support capacity for mentorship and training for youth ages 11-18 in the West Central neighborhood.
- **SNAP Financial Access:** Improving strategies to market SNAP Financial Access' income and asset building services to low- and moderate-income households.
- **Spokane Tribe of Indians:** Coordinating communications and developing an action plan to improve basic infrastructure on the Spokane Indian Reservation.
- **Volunteers of America:** Assisting in the creation and/or improvement of a countywide system to connect homeless youth ages 16-24 to support structures.

Health

- **Community-Minded Enterprises, Recovery Café:** Building financial and volunteer capacity of the Recovery Café to support individuals in ending the cycle of addiction using a drug- and alcohol-free peer-support model.
- **Gonzaga University, Center for Community Engagement:** Identifying and developing partnerships to strengthen community and improve resident health in Northeast Spokane.
- **North Central High School & Dornsife Center for Community Engagement:** Developing a youth wellness program to support mental health and create a culture of emotional preparedness, enabling students to complete their degrees and persist in post-secondary pursuits.
- **Operation Healthy Family, Dental Access Program:** Creating sustainability for an organization expanding options for access to free or low-cost dental education, prevention and treatment.