

This report...

In calendar year 2010, Maine National Service programs' 4400 participants served in local communities across the state. The maps of where the 36 National Service Programs assigned their volunteers show that no corner of the state was untouched.

This report is a *companion* to the data reports filed by National Service grantees in Maine and the data profiles of National Service impact compiled by the federal program administrator -- the Corporation for National and Community Service -- and the state grantmaker, the Maine Commission for Community Service.

The data reports describe the amount of impact, the local improvements or changes that occur, the taxpayer "return on investment," and so much more.

This report is like the weather service's "ground truth" -- it provides snapshots of the activity on the ground, in the towns, in homes, and in schools.

National Service participants tackle local educational, health, public safety, environmental, disaster response, and human service needs. Each local program is part of one of the three major branches:

- Senior Corps which is comprised of Foster Grandparents, RSVP, and Senior Companions;
- Learn and Serve which is made up of Learn & Serve K-12, Summer of Service, Youth Empowerment Zones, Learn & Serve Higher Ed;
- AmeriCorps which is comprised of AmeriCorps*State/National, VISTA, and the National Civilian Community Corps.

The Maine Commission for Community Service compiled this report from material submitted by National Service grantee staff and the exit reports from Maine's 2010 AmeriCorps members.

These are examples and we urge readers to contact program directors to learn more.

For data reports as well as contact information, please refer to these websites:

MaineServiceCommission.gov/national-service/

NationalService.gov/about/role_impact/state_profiles.asp



After one year, an AmeriCorps Member Legacy

I was working with one student who the teacher and pretty much the whole school had given up on. He got into a lot of trouble.

One day he didn't show up for class but another classmate had seen him around. So he was called to the office and the teacher picked him up there and brought him to the class. She spent about 5 minutes in the hall scolding him. He came in and sat down, clearly angry.

The ed-tech wanted him to get right to work. I decided he might need some time to talk about life. So I asked him how his day was.

We proceeded to have a conversation about how frustrated he was with everything. He kept getting into fights with his teachers. He was always wrong in someone's eyes, and couldn't get anything right.

So he had given up and was thinking about abandoning his hopes of getting his diploma.

I told him, "That's only a month away. Why would you give up on that?"

"The only person who loses in that situation is you. You're not going to teach the school anything by giving up.

"And as for the fights, remember there are two people in the fight. You're the other half. The direction of a conversation is up to you too."

Well, he didn't give up. He came back to the next class to try to cooperate, and when he disagreed he calmly expressed his thoughts. As a matter of fact, he showed up for every class after that, and he did his work.

It wasn't his favorite thing, you could tell. But he seemed to have a new understanding. He seemed to regain some pride in his abilities, and focus more on what he could do rather than what everyone thought he would fail at.

And when he left high school, diploma in hand, I am certain it was with a deeper faith in himself and what he can accomplish.

One conversation can change a lot.



More AmeriCorps Member Field Reports



My most significant accomplishments probably resulted from one-on-one work with students. As far as a legacy, I believe I have created a place for the Aspirations Lab in the culture of Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School. I think that even more students will take advantage of this space next year as it becomes more established.



The creation of the Senior Commodity Supplemental Food Program in Aroostook County is my biggest accomplishment this year. In conjunction with Aroostook Area Agency on Aging this program provides 417 seniors with monthly food packages.



My two community garden projects will be my legacy. I came to Wayside wanting to increase the amount of fresh, local produce distributed to those receiving our foods, and I believe I've made an impact in that realm. The gardens are also the first project Wayside has in helping people produce their own food.



Making many small improvements in Maine public lands, including removal of logging slash from streams, removal of trash from timber harvest sites, cleaning up spilled fluids and stained soil at a log landing, mitigating erosion and runoff from roads and gravel pits into streams.



Improved reading and writing abilities for my students as well as assisting them in developing resumes, visual portfolios, helping provide accurate employment data for each of them.



Helped create, research, and promote a client education program for low income homeowners who take advantage of Community Action Agency's weatherization programs.



I provided a detailed report to area lake associations listing all aquatic plants found within their lake. They can then use this information in following years. They can also rest assured that they do not have any invasive aquatic plant infestations. I provided a rather costly service / skill set at a seriously good cost (FREE!)



I worked behind the scenes to improve the underlying structure of our volunteer management systems with the goal of creating sustainable resources for all 3 of our Education Centers. During my 2 AmeriCorps terms, the change in the programs' sustainability and organization enabled us to expand our volunteer capacity and the ability to serve more community members. I also made a lot of friends and had a ton of fun!

Foster Grandparents Making a Difference in Education

 Richard Hogue, a volunteer Foster Grandparent at CK Burns School in Saco, had free time after retiring from his career as a firefighter. Hogue is the only Foster Grandparent at this school.

The first year he spent in the fifth-grade classrooms and he now volunteers in the school's library.

"I go in five mornings a week and my job is to interact with the kids, read them stories, help pick out books, read some of the reports they've done," Hogue explains. "I usually do a unit on Maine Native American history as required by law in the state of Maine."

 Grammy Sandy [Sandy Manter] is amazing at providing students with the TLC they deserve and need. I pride myself at being nurturing, but when faced with the challenges of managing 19 children ages 5 & 6, I can't always listen to everyone when they need it. Sandy can and does. Students often go directly to her when sharing an important event or story. She respects every student and they love her for that.

Teacher Allison Chioda, Longfellow School, Portland

 Betty [Emmons] is an enormous help. I have 18 active first graders. Eight students are English language learners. The District provides limited pull-out services and budgets are tight.

Betty is my extra eyes and ears. She notices when a child is struggling and steps in to help. She helps them stay organized, listens to them read, and helps them choose books. Betty follows along with lessons so she knows how to support the kids in math and reading. The Foster Grandparent Program provides an invaluable service in our school. Betty provides an invaluable service to me and my students.

Teacher Marydee Stinson, Riverton School, Portland

 I am not sure I have words enough to describe the effect Mimi [Mary Anne Maloney] has on me, the school, and most importantly, the kids. How can I describe in a few sentences the many hours she spends guiding children through books or their very own writing?

How can I describe in a couple of sentences the many times she comforts a child in tears as they look desperately for a lost library book or some work that has been misplaced? How can I describe in a couple of sentences the love she gives each day through her kind words, hugs and those warm chocolate chip cookies? I simply can not!

Teacher Rene Custeau, East End Community School, Portland



Learn & Serve K-12 Students Link Academics and Community Problems

- Fourth-grade students learned how artists design and create art for public places by considering location and audience and also learned that government-funded building projects often include funds to for art works representing the local community.

Each of four classrooms designed and created collaborative pieces of art for different sites in Lincoln. Students donated their original artworks to sites without percent for art funding. Community partners visited each classroom to discuss the space where the art would be placed, the type of public access, and the vision each partner had for the artwork. All students are responsible for some portion of each collaborative piece.

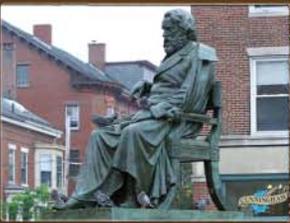
- Students in Grades 7 and 8 are partnering with the Lincoln Historical Society and the Lincoln Memorial Library to preserve local history on the Maine Memory Network. Seventh-grade students are scanning and captioning historical photographs and building a website that will include these photographs in featured exhibits such as Founding Fathers and Early History, the Paper Industry, Wartime Lincoln, and Influential Institutions.

Eighth-grade students are capturing oral histories on video tape and transcribing them and working in their English classes to acquire and apply writing skills and oral communication skills needed to complete the project.

The project is supported by a Maine Community Heritage Project grant and has created a great deal of enthusiasm among community members who donate information or photographs.

- Students in the Contemporary Issues class at Mattanawcook Academy are committed to changing the community's perception of young people. They are demonstrating responsible citizenship by helping the town of Lincoln map its local cemeteries, a project that would cost thousands of dollars if the town were to contract with an outside agency to do the work. These students and their teacher have partnered with the town manager, the director of the local funeral home, and others to map the cemeteries as weather conditions permit access to the grave stones and lots.

Students apply previously acquired mapping and orientation skills, mathematics, and communication skills, but feel that the project teaches even more as they learn from the adults with whom they are working and from the gravestones themselves.



RSVP Volunteers Impact Recidivism, Health Agencies' Service Capacity

“Thresholds” is a 5-step decision making model for inmates in County Correctional Facilities who are anticipating release within the next 6 months. Teaching the course is one of the HealthReach RSVP volunteer opportunities, a program of Maine General. The program was developed by Margaret L. Rogers and the Ecumenical Institute and is built around the premise that people can be successful at critical thinking and good decision making. The program is offered at Kennebec County Jail, Somerset County Jail, Central Maine Pre-Release Center, and the State of Maine’s Probation and Parole program.

Don Abrams is one of the team who conducts the program. He visits Kennebec County Jail twice a week for four weeks and teaches groups of inmates a better way to make a decision, to see their way out of making the same mistakes, so they can lead more productive lives. Don has this to say about his experiences: “I do it because I find it extremely interesting and challenging to work with people who don’t always get a decent break. I feel that it’s such a worthwhile program and I believe that we do touch at least some of these people, making a difference in their lives. It gives me a real sense of accomplishment to watch when one of them has an ‘a-ha moment!’”

Over 150 inmates have graduated from this program and the recidivism rate (return to jail) for Threshold graduates after one year back in the community is 39%. This compares to a 50% recidivism rate among the general population.

RSVP volunteer Yvonne Lambert may fit the image many people have of seniors. She has bright white hair with a sparkling wit that shows in the twinkle in her eyes despite her chronic health conditions. In addition, Yvonne is also a very active older adult with many demands on her time.

She explains “I’m so busy that I’ve had to choose the activities that mean the most to me.” Volunteer service to community through RSVP is one of those activities. She works at several organizations including the Hampden Public Library, a neighborhood food cupboard, and Community Cafés (meal sites).

At each place, she applies her unique perspective and skills. For example, she’s learning computer literacy skills to share at the library, packaging food with recipes at the food cupboard to assist those with limited cooking skills to make the most of the food they are offered.



RSVP Field Reports (continued)

 The UMaine Center on Aging's RSVP has eleven volunteers who have served with RSVP for many years. They are older adults with disabilities, associated with Ralph Leek Elders and Finson Road Assisted Living agencies in Bangor. These agencies provide an array of experiences designed to support personal growth, wellness, self-advocacy, and maintaining community connections for their group home residents.

Volunteering engages these individuals in a variety of activities that foster community connections. Some are involved with the Cake Bakers group. These RSVP members bake and deliver cakes as well as throw birthday parties for residents of the Dorthea Dix Psychiatric Center. Others, along with their caseworkers, deliver meals to homebound seniors. They also serve as friendly visiting and bingo aides at various assisted living centers and nursing homes in the area.

 Keith Elwell's goal was to rise from a chair and stand without holding on to anything. Most of us don't think twice about doing that. But for Elwell, who uses a walker, it was an important goal. Thanks to his participation in Bone Builders, an exercise program taught by MaineGeneral HealthReach RSVP volunteers, Elwell can not only rise once from a chair without help, he can do it 12 times in a row.

This exercise is one of many included in Bone Builders, a program that includes free-weight training and exercises to increase muscle strength, balance, bone density and to protect against fractures caused by osteoporosis.

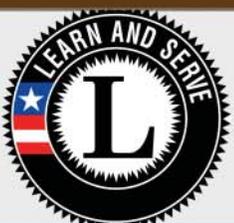
"Keith has made such strides and worked so hard," says Sylvia Spear, one of the RSVP volunteer trainers. "He is so proud of himself – and rightly so. This class has really made a difference in his life."

Bone Builders classes are offered in Kennebec and Somerset counties and RSVP plans to add classes in Franklin County. Spear notes that participants not only move better and have more flexibility as a result of the class – they benefit socially as well.

RSVP volunteers Spear of Waterville and Whynelle Farlow of Mount Vernon lead the class. Both attended special training to become instructors because they believe in the power of exercise and enjoy sharing that with others. And they benefit from the class as well.

"I've been part of Bone Builders since it started," says Spear, 76. "And I find I can go to the beach and walk on the rocks without fear of falling."

Farlow, 64, added "The saying 'If you don't use it, you lose it' is true. And you are never too old to start exercising."



The Legacy of Senior Companions

 Gerald Saucier of Caribou and his wife, Isabelle Saucier, are Senior Companions in Aroostook County. As he explains, "I am 76 years old and I've come to the point in my life where this is probably all I'm able to do. We are senior companions to folks who are elderly, some with no means of transportation, some have no relatives around to visit and assist them with their shopping or to even take them out of the house."

The folks we companion are at the last stage of their lives. On more than one occasion I had to call for help for a client because they had fallen or were too ill to get out of bed. If I hadn't been there some of those elderly would have perished before anyone found them.

I usually take them out to shop, to the Doctors office, sometimes out to eat and sometimes we just sit and discuss the old days, current world events, and small things like what kind of foods we like. We are often the only tie to the world outside of their apartment.

 "Liz started visiting my Dad in 2007, soon after he arrived in Maine. He knew no one in Maine except for me and my family. Loneliness was a huge issue. At first Dad did not really understand Liz's role but she kept coming around and they kept finding things to do. I know he would save his Fridays for Liz, for example, and then spend the time telling stories of his life.

The evaluation of the program I completed does not tell the whole story – she was constantly there for Dad throughout his physical decline, visiting him in the hospital, rehab and nursing home once he could not stay at his apartment. She genuinely enjoyed him and he truly looked forward to their visits. She was a real GIFT for Dad. Please give her a hug and let her know how special she is.

Thanks,
A grateful daughter"

This letter was sent to PROP's Senior Companion Program director. The person referenced in the letter is Elizabeth Paige, a Senior Companion assigned to an elderly man referred by the Alzheimer's Association of Maine.

 My elderly [Senior Companion] client was not mobile, depending on a walker whenever he walked outside. He fell a lot and was at risk of breaking his hip! He was always afraid to go very far, worrying he would become too tired to walk back to the house. I suggested that he ask his doctor about purchasing a walker with a built in seat, which he did. The seat would allow him to sit and rest, and then walk some more.

He is now walking farther than ever with the new walker, even down to the Post Office! He is much stronger, and he has lessened the chances of falling due to unused muscles. This client is now more independent and more capable of living alone.



Changing A Life: A Senior Companion Story

One of my clients has been a friend of mine for many years. We met in a spinning group that eventually disbanded, but we kept in touch for several years, attending the same church. When she moved quite a distance away, we would only see each other a couple of times a year.

Because of the Senior Companion Program (SCP), we established more regular contact again. This friend had always been an active and vital person, having been a great mom and having raised a wonderful family.

I always knew her as a strong woman, full of adventure. She loved farming and had always had her own horses, sheep and various other farm animals. She always impressed me with her sharp business sense and was able to remain a very independent woman.

To find her alone at 80 years old pretty much settled into a sedentary life, reading, and watching TV and having given up all of the things she loved was heartbreaking. To me she was still my hero, but her life had greatly deteriorated. She was still raising some chickens and selling some eggs, and also had small dogs that she bred and sold to try to supplement her Social Security.

There were things with her home that she needed help with and like most people living on SS, was struggling just to make ends meet. Her roof on her house was leaking and covered with mold and she had problems with her heating system. She was totally unaware of any services that were available to her and had no idea how she could afford to do the things that needed to be done.

With all the information SCP volunteers are provided, I was able to help her get connected with a community action program that put a new roof on her house. During the inspection they noted some other repairs that were needed. They fixed all of these things for her and she then applied for fuel assistance.

We found out about places where she could go and walk inside every day and she began going to a local church for exercise.

I had taken her some fresh goats milk and cheese from my small farm. After a few visits she said that she wished that she could have goats but thought she was too old and didn't think she could care for them and do the milking.

With some encouragement, she thought it over and decided to buy TWO. She immediately began milking and making ALL KINDS of wonderful cheeses! This was in addition to her selling eggs, as well. A few weeks later I asked her how she felt about having made the decision to get dairy goats. With excitement and emotion in her voice she told me that she felt like she was alive again.



Last summer she took advantage of the Senior Farm Share program and is doing the same this year. This also gets her out on a regular basis to go to the farm stand nearby. She is also frequenting a local food bank and has made contact with the free financial advisors regarding Medicare benefits.

This summer she has raised two lambs for her freezer.

She has a new lease on life, and all of these things have been made available to her because of the local SCP program. When I started seeing her again she was discouraged, bored with her life, needed help and was resigned to just growing old and trying to make ends meet.

Her life has changed dramatically for the better just through having a companion to guide her in the direction of the help that she needs and to encourage her to do the things that she enjoys. Her home is in good repair, she has assistance with fuel and food, giving her a little more breathing room with her income and has a list of numbers to call of people who can help her to remain independent and living in her home that she loves.



“Advancing Volunteerism. Strengthening Communities.”



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