

## AmeriCorps\*VISTA Progress Report

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**Grant Number:** 06VSNWI009

**Period Covered by this Report:**  
**From: 09/26/2010 to 12/31/2010**

### Data Updates

# of VISTA Members on board at end of reporting period	24
# of Community Volunteers serving who are Baby Boomers	103
Dollar value of cash resources developed by VISTA Members	26135
# of Service Hours performed by Community Volunteers	2497
Dollar value of non-cash resources developed by VISTA Members	7994
# of VISTA Members supported by cost share	2
# of Community Volunteers serving	490

### Member and Sponsor Development

	AmeriCorps *VISTA Members	Supervisors	CNCS Funded	Funded by Other Source	Comments
On-Site Orientation	5	5	Y	N	
Community Outreach	24	0	Y	N	
Community Volunteer Generation/Recruitment	4	0	Y	N	
Effective Volunteer Management	4	0	Y	N	
Resource Mapping	5	5	Y	N	
Resource Development/Fundraising	5	0	Y	N	
Grant Writing	5	5	Y	N	
Organizational Development	24	25	Y	N	
Performance Measures	24	25	Y	N	
Tracking Systems	24	25	Y	N	
Information Technology	24	0	Y	N	
Developing On-Site Orientations and Training Plans	0	5	Y	N	
Other (Please Specify)	24	0	Y	Y	AmeriCorps Opening Ceremony, VISTA Networking Meeting, Poverty Matters Conference

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### Project Plan

Service Category: Other Education

#### Performance Milestone

##### Milestone

All school sites establish Action Teams for Partnerships to facilitate family involvement at the site.

##### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

##### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

##### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Action Teams for Partnerships are established and members recruited.

##### Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

##### Actual # or % to date

80 %

##### How Measured

Sign-in sheet

##### Description of Data Collection

Membership lists will be submitted with bi-weekly and quarterly reports, which must include at least 1 administrator, 2 parents, 2 teachers, and 2 others.

##### Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs are making good progress in establishing their action teams. Nearly all of our July and August start VISTAs have established or are working with ATPs or similar groups. Of those who are not, sites are making strides in recruiting members, raising awareness, and gaining administrative buy-in. The buy-in is often the most critical piece that needs to be in place before VISTAs can move forward. Supervisors are expected to work with their VISTA to find members, train members and sustain these teams. Our VISTAs at the district level in Milwaukee (Angela Rumsey, Angie Domagalski and Bix Firer) are working with ALL functioning action teams in an effort to spread the partnership model. Angie and Bix are targeting high schools in the district to provide technical assistance and support.

#### Performance Milestone

##### Milestone

All VISTAs map community assets and collect data on their site's climate to connect partnership work among all stakeholders.

##### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

##### Actual Period of Accomplishment

December 2010

##### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

% of VISTAs who submit community asset maps to DPI.

##### Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

##### Actual # or % to date

100 %

##### How Measured

Community Partner Survey

##### Description of Data Collection

Community asset mapping will be completed by all VISTAs using tools distributed at Orientation. Results of mapping will be submitted with Quarterly Reports.

##### Progress this Reporting Period

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At the close of Quarter 1, all July, August, and November start VISTAs have completed their community asset maps. These maps will be used throughout the year as a way to track potential partners and create sustainability.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

All VISTAs will research, write, and submit grants to sustain programs beyond their service year.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of grants submitted.

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

20 #

#### Actual # or % to date

10 #

#### How Measured

Sustainability Checklist

#### Description of Data Collection

Pre/post surveys, bi-weekly and quarterly reports, and community asset map will also be used.

Twenty grants will have been written and submitted by VISTAs in our project. This is roughly one grant per VISTA.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs wrote and submitted 7 grants this quarter, which brings our total to 10. Juanita Peck, serving with the Altoona School District, wrote and submitted a grant to host an AmeriCorps member through DPI's Every Student a Graduate program. She approached staff with this idea as a way to help at-risk students receive targeted assistance. Brandon Jackson, serving with the Milwaukee PTA, wrote a grant to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to provide a technology upgrade to PTA offices. The PTA received this grant totalling \$5,300.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

School/district sites will implement family-school-community practices that help families make a connection to their children's learning.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

December 2010

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of activities/practices implemented.

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

120 #

#### Actual # or % to date

135 #

#### How Measured

Activity log

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### Description of Data Collection

Action Plans and agendas of activities, as well as project descriptions, will be submitted by the VISTAs in bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will coordinate at least six family-school-community events or initiatives throughout the year.

### Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs planned and implemented 105 family partnership activities this past quarter which, in addition to the 30 activities reported last quarter, exceeded our yearly goal. VISTAs have organized Family Nights, trainings for staff and volunteers, and other family programs to allow low income families to access resources to help their children succeed. For example, Tracy Steffens, serving in Oshkosh, organized a successful Family Science Carnival Night, in partnership with the PTO. Staff volunteered to help out at the event and over 100 people attended! In addition, Bethany Bridges, serving at two elementary schools in Racine, is working to establish a mentoring program with African-American males. Volunteers are from the community and are largely also African-American men. This program will help to connect students to the community, to mentors, and provide them additional social, behavioral and academic support.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

School/district sites will have an identified process for partnerships that includes the Action Team for Partnerships.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

Percent of Action Teams that have started work on next year action plan.

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

#### Actual # or % to date

0 %

#### How Measured

NA

### Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will ensure that Year-end UPDATE surveys and Action Plans are submitted to DPI.

### Progress this Reporting Period

This information will be reported on in Quarter 3 once VISTAs and their sites have submitted their completed action plans.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Families and community members will feel welcome in their local school, have an understanding of the importance of being involved in their children's learning, and know how to participate to help improve the educational progress and outcomes of their children.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

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Aug 2011

August 2011

### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Positive feedback on evaluations from events, programs and partnership activities. Every VISTA will survey families once each quarter to gauge effectiveness and usefulness of programming. Survey templates will be distributed by DPI.

### Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

### Actual # or % to date

50 %

### How Measured

Pre/Post test

### Description of Data Collection

At least 50% of families surveyed will indicate a positive experience with the site's partnership activity, event, or program.

### Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs continue to survey parents at family events, programs and other activities to gauge the usefulness of the programming they are providing. At a Family Nutrition Night, Emily Caragianis at Cunningham Elementary School in Beloit, reports that 100% of families in attendance rated the event as "good" or "excellent" in helping them support their child's healthy eating. 68% of respondents said they have learned more about the importance of nutrition and healthy meals in achieving learning outcomes. Angela Rumsey, serving at the MPS Central Office, distributed a survey to any parent who attended parent professional development sessions. In response to questions about the usefulness of these trainings to support their children's learning at home parents rated these sessions a 4.5 out of 5. Finally, Amanda Vandehey, serving with the Wausau school district, reports that 100% of attendees at a recent parent education night responded positively about the benefits and usefulness of the workshops.

### The community need statement

We know that when families are involved in their children's learning and know how to advocate for their children, students from all backgrounds, but especially low-income students, do better in school. They earn better grades, stay in school longer and go on to post-secondary education (Epstein and Henderson, et. al.). VISTAs in our project focus on schools identified for improvement (SIFI) under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and serve a high percentage of low income children and families. Greater economic opportunity is available to students who perform better in school and successfully graduate from high school. Strong partnerships with families is integral to addressing Wisconsin's achievement gap between students of color and their white peers; identified as the largest achievement gap in the country. Through family partnerships we can improve the educational experiences and outcomes of all students and families. Additionally, in an effort to provide comprehensive support to low income families, Wisconsin libraries are establishing job skills development programs to help individuals get the training they need to re-enter the work force. The unemployment rate in Wisconsin is over 8%. With resources available, individuals can build their own capacity to gain employment.

### Goal Statement

The goal of the DPI VISTA Project is to build capacity for family involvement in low-income schools and communities by implementing a research-based, sustainable process for partnerships.

## Performance Milestone

### Milestone

All school/district VISTAs will coordinate family partnership activities that address the cultural and racial diversity of the site.

### Planned Period of Accomplishment

### Actual Period of Accomplishment

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Aug 2011

August 2011

**Indicator/Evidence of Progress**

Each school/district VISTA will help facilitate at least ONE activity that provides opportunity for cultural exchange among families, students, staff, and community members at the site.

**Target # (number) or % (percent)**

20 #

**Actual # or % to date**

7 #

**How Measured**

Activity log

**Description of Data Collection**

Action Plans and agendas of activities, as well as project descriptions, will be submitted by the VISTAs in bi-weekly and quarterly reports.

**Progress this Reporting Period**

VISTAs facilitated five activities this quarter that addressed cultural and racial diversity of their sites. Mike Valente, serving at Clarke Street School in Milwaukee, helped to organize an exchange program between students at Clarke and students at Canterbury Elementary School in Greendale, WI. This exchange involved students traveling to Canterbury (and those students traveling to Milwaukee) to learn about another community and also learn about the cultures and languages of fellow students. Amanda Shapiro, VISTA in West Allis, organized ELL classes for Spanish speaking parents to share resources on supporting their children at home and also on navigating the school system as a non white, non native English speakers.

**Performance Milestone**

**Milestone**

All VISTAs will solicit monetary and in kind donations to enable low income families to attend events and participate in partnership activities.

**Planned Period of Accomplishment**

Aug 2011

**Actual Period of Accomplishment**

October 2010

**Indicator/Evidence of Progress**

Number of donations received.

**Target # (number) or % (percent)**

40 #

**Actual # or % to date**

139 #

**How Measured**

NA

**Description of Data Collection**

Each VISTA will receive at least two monetary or in kind donations throughout the course of the year. Bi weekly reports will be used to collect this information from each VISTA member.

**Progress this Reporting Period**

VISTAs have reported over 80 donations this quarter, which surpasses our YEARLY goal of 40. Despite a challenging economy, VISTAs have been able to solicit donations to help fund their programs and help eliminate barriers for families to attend events. Heather Keyes, VISTA at the Indian Community School in Franklin, continues to generate donations to use as incentives and door prizes for family events but also as resources for families to take home and use with their children. Ellen Carpenter received donations to support a Parents and

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Teachers Talking Together program at Nuestro Mundo Community School in Madison including food and materials.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

VISTAs will help sites in meeting the challenges of developing meaningful, reciprocal family partnerships.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

July 2011

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

At least 75% of our school/district sites will indicate on their yearly UPDATE survey, making at least "good progress" on meeting the partnership challenges at their sites.

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

75 %

#### Actual # or % to date

0 %

#### How Measured

Survey

#### Description of Data Collection

Data will be collected from the NNPS UPDATE survey each site must submit by June 30th.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

This data will be reported on in Quarter 3 after we have received the UPDATE surveys from all of our sites.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

All sites will develop community partnerships to help implement programs, activities and sustain their work.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

NA

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

80 #

#### Actual # or % to date

60 #

#### How Measured

Survey

#### Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will report on the number of community partners in bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will develop at least 4 partnerships throughout their service year.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

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VISTAs are always working to expand their community partner networks. They are partnering with business organizations, community organizations, faith-based organizations and other educational institutions. Amber Richardson, VISTA at the Racine Public Library, put a large focus on partnerships this past quarter. She attended outreach events in the community and represented the library at fairs and other community programs. Amber states: "The best practice I found in getting to know your new community was to go to several outreach programs as a representative of the library. I saw what people in my community were like first hand and was able to speak with several people one on one about what they would like to be offered at the library. It also gave me a better understanding of how things may function differently in Racine compared to other sites in the state. By attending these outreach events and representing the library, I got a better understanding of my role as a VISTA and made a lot of very important contacts in the area." These contacts are now the partners that Amber is working with to open a Community Resource Center at the library.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Community Volunteers (including individuals 55 and older) will provide the people power and support in order for all sites to implement events, activities, and sustain partnership programs.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

October 2010

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

community volunteers recruited

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

200 #

#### Actual # or % to date

763 #

#### How Measured

NA

#### Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will report on the number of volunteers recruited through bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Each VISTA will recruit 10 volunteers over the course of their service year.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs recruited nearly 500 volunteers this quarter and in addition to their work from Quarter 4 have now recruited 763 volunteers to support programs, provide people power for resource centers, and tutor students in need of extra academic assistance. Kathy Lewis, serving at Ashland High School, recruited 43 volunteers this quarter who will help run a tutoring program for students and provide support to the school's anti-bullying program. Emily Minerath, VISTA at the Madison Public Library, recruited 11 new volunteers to help with job assistance across the city at branch libraries and non profit agencies.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Library sites will have an established process for offering employment assistance and skills development to community members.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

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Aug. 2011

December 2010

### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

The number of libraries who have employment skills/development programs or centers.

### Target # (number) or % (percent)

3 #

### Actual # or % to date

3 #

### How Measured

Activity log

### Description of Data Collection

VISTAs will report on their progress through bi-weekly and quarterly reports. All libraries will have an established job help program or center.

### Progress this Reporting Period

To date, all three library sites have opened centers that provide job resources and other assistance to low income and unemployed individuals. The Fond du Lac and Madison centers have been functioning successfully for months, but the Racine Library has recently opened its center and is working to provide resources to patrons.

## Performance Milestone

### Milestone

Community members will benefit personally and professionally from the resources and training opportunities at library sites.

### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

participants

### Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

### Actual # or % to date

50 %

### How Measured

Survey

### Description of Data Collection

Library users will complete a feedback survey to share their stories. At least 50% of users will indicate a positive experience with library job help programs or centers either in terms of gaining employment or learning new and useful skills.

### Progress this Reporting Period

Two of three library sites have distributed and analyzed surveys to users of their job centers and programs. Over 70% of users stated they benefited personally and professionally from the resources offered at the site. Our third library site has only recently opened a center and we expect surveys to be collected in the next quarter.

## Performance Milestone

### Milestone

Staff at school/district sites will support and encourage the work of the VISTA member and the family partnership program

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each member and supervisor helps to develop and implement.

### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

### Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

participants

### Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

### Actual # or % to date

50 %

### How Measured

Survey

### Description of Data Collection

50% of staff at each site who work with families will be trained in the Six Types of Family Involvement, the Action Team for Partnerships model, and the VISTA project.

### Progress this Reporting Period

16 of our VISTAs have provided training to staff on the partnerships model and the VISTA project. The remaining 4 VISTAs at schools and districts have not yet done anything formal to train other staff or arrange for training for other staff but we anticipate a focus on this in the third quarter.

## Performance Milestone

### Milestone

District sites will support family partnership programs at individual schools through providing resources, trainings, and technical assistance.

### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Aug 2011

### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2011

### Indicator/Evidence of Progress:

participants

### Target # (number) or % (percent)

100 %

### Actual # or % to date

82 %

### How Measured

Survey

### Description of Data Collection

All district sites will offer one or more of the following: 1) training on the ATP process, 2) district wide newsletter to disseminate promising partnership practices, 3) surveys to collect feedback and input from families or 4) publications/reports.

### Progress this Reporting Period

82% of our district level VISTAs have offered one of the following listed above. We expect the remaining VISTAs to accomplish this task in the next quarter. Of the VISTAs serving at the district level, 55% distribute monthly or bi-monthly newsletters, 55% distribute surveys to families, 18% offered training to staff and families on partnerships, and 18% published some kind of report about partnerships in their district. District level VISTAs are in Madison, Milwaukee, Wausau, West-Allis, Altoona, and Racine.

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### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Former VISTA sites will be supported and partnerships will be sustained through the creation of a statewide network.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

Ongoing

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

Ongoing

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Percentage of former sites surveyed who report that partnership activities established during the VISTA grant are continuing.

#### Target # (number) or % (percent)

50 %

#### Actual # or % to date

0 %

#### How Measured

NA

#### Description of Data Collection

Phone surveys and in person interviews will be conducted with former sites to determine the lasting impact of the VISTA. Additionally, all former sites will receive a statewide newsletter and continued support and technical assistance from DPI.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

We are recruiting current VISTA members to help conduct phone and in person surveys of former sites to determine the lasting impact of the VISTA member. All former sites are receiving a statewide newsletter that has been distributed by the Community Learning and Partnerships team at DPI.

## Narratives

### Challenges

Our biggest challenge this past quarter centered around the personal challenges of one of our November VISTAs, Stephanie Jewell. We worked closely with our Program Officer to address these issues but ultimately, this VISTA had to resign, effective on January 15, 2011.

Stephanie was unable to make the commitment to this program due to financial and child care concerns. We worked closely with her to attempt to find resources and alternative solutions but in the end, she was not in a position to serve in this capacity.

This challenge, while handled well, did prompt us to think even more about how we can prepare VISTAs for entering into a year of living on a limited means. In addition to the efforts we make to give VISTAs a sense of what their year will be like before they enroll (including screenings, job shadowing and a self-assessment) we have decided to distribute a sample budget to each candidate to get a sense for what a month is like living on a limited stipend. We hope this will help relay to candidates the reality of making a commitment to serve.

### Recruitment

This quarter we finalized our recruitment for 6 new VISTA members who began their service on November 19 (though at the time of this report, 1 of these VISTAs resigned). These VISTAs are serving in Racine, where the VISTA will work to establish a district wide parent education system; Milwaukee, where one VISTA will work at the district level to promote partnerships at MPS high schools, and the other will work with the Milwaukee PTA to mobilize low income parents and help schools nurture parent leaders; Wisconsin Rapids, where the VISTA will help build sustainability at the third year site Grove Elementary School; and Altoona, a first year site where the VISTA will focus on creating a climate for family involvement.

All VISTAs bring a variety of experiences and skills to their positions and have connected with our current members through our November 30th Networking meeting, webinars, and other means. We provided these new VISTAs with an Orientation and training in November to ensure that they were prepared to begin their service.

Finally, project staff discussed the upcoming recruitment season and are making plans to launch eGrants postings and other online promotions in early February. We have plans to attend several recruitment fairs in the early spring, many in partnership with Wisconsin Campus Compact.

### Training/Technical Assistance Needs

VISTAs are given the opportunity to request additional trainings or technical assistance in every bi-weekly report. We track these requests and the Project Coordinator and VISTA Leaders address them. This past quarter we had requests for the following topics:

- How to build relationships with parents/community members
- Using You Tube
- Grant writing
- How to write editorial pieces
- Successful advertising techniques
- Fundraising
- Building a brand for your school/site/district
- Using social media
- Diversity
- How to form/run a math focus group
- Story telling/telling the counter story
- Marketing/ "selling" parent involvement
- Facilitating meetings

We have addressed all of these through personal coaching from Project staff, webinars or archives of former webinars that we post online, and organized VISTA trainings. If a topic is something that can be addressed with additional resources or reading materials, project staff provide these to the members.

### Partnership/Collaboration Development

### Narratives

As a project, we continue to collaborate as much as possible with other VISTA programs (and AmeriCorps programs) in our state as we feel that to address the real needs of Wisconsin communities, we must all work together. This includes, but is not limited to, distributing directories of other programs to all of our members and establishing a statewide VISTA list serv to allow members from all projects to communicate and share information and resources.

Many of our sites are reaching out to other national service members in their communities to build networks. Our members in Racine are meeting with other VISTA and AmeriCorps members monthly to connect, share resources, and discuss ways to work together. Our members in the Fox Valley and Beloit areas are doing the same. We continue to encourage VISTAs to form regional networks across the state.

Additionally, our VISTA project will be working with Wisconsin Campus Compact and the State Office to organize an End of Year Celebration and Retreat open to all VISTAs in the state on June 17, 2011. This event will be held at Devil's Lake and will allow an opportunity for reflection and networking. In addition, all members will participate in a service project together at the park in return for an entrance fee waiver.

Finally, we are working with a Serve Wisconsin organized group of AmeriCorps Program Directors who have members in Milwaukee Public Schools to coordinate our efforts. Though at this time AmeriCorps programs are the only invitees, the DPI VISTA project is represented and we are advocating for the expansion of this group to include VISTA and Senior Corps programs who are working in MPS.

### Resource Development

This was a very successful quarter for us in terms of generating resources. VISTAs procured in kind donations, monetary donations and grants. Some highlights are below.

Ellen Carpenter, Madison School District

- Dessert for 40 from My Menu
- 20 pieces of pan dulce from Pan y Pan
- 4 Gift certificates for free large pizzas from Dominoes
- 4 \$10 gift certificates for El Bolillo Bakery
- 5 Gift certificates for free large pizzas from Pizza Hut
- 3 large pizzas from The Pizza Pit
- 9 large pizzas from The Glass Nickel-1 large pizza from Buck's Pizza
- 2 large pizzas from the Pizza Oven
- 2 large pizzas from Rocky Rococco's
- 2 large pizzas from the Roman Candle
- \$10 gift card from Copps
- \$100 gift card from Wal Mart Super Center
- Paper plates, plastic wear, napkins, cups from Walgreens
- 1 lb. of coffee from Ken's Meat Market
- \$700.00 Grant awarded from Target Field Trip Grants for the Casa de San Martin Field Trip.

Brandon Jackson, Milwaukee PTA

- \$5,300.00 grant from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation
- \$9,350.00 grant from the Argosy Foundation
- \$950.00 grant from WEAC.

Kathy Lewis, Ashland High School

- \$100 in gift cards to Wal-Mart for 'Caught Caring' prize drawings
- \$100 in gift cards to Family Video for 'Caught Caring' prize drawings
- \$100 in gift cards to Pizza Pub for 'Caught Caring' prize drawings
- Gifts for tutor thank-yous
- Free advertisement in Evergreen Shopper
- Free advertisement in Ashland Current
- 5 presenters for Family Meetings
- \$1,100 donation from Northern Native American Health Alliance

## Narratives

Amanda Shapiro, West Allis- West Milwaukee School District

- Kohl's \$500 cash donation
- Goodwill \$200 voucher
- Chili's Bar and Grill \$15 gift cards
- Cousins \$15 gift cards
- Subway \$20 gift cards
- Barnes & Noble \$25 books
- Bakers Square \$50 gift cards
- Individual Donations \$250 (clothing, household goods, cleaning products, furniture)

Katrina Waldron, Madison School District

- Einstein Bros. bagels for Intercambio program: \$240
- Chocolate Shoppe, Inc.: (10) good-for-1 free ice cream gift certificates (\$10 value)
- Sundance Cinemas: (2) VIP movie passes (\$20 value)
- Milio's Sandwiches: (3) \$5 gift certificates (\$15 value)
- Topper's Pizza: (1) large pizza gift certificate (\$8 value)
- Copps Food Center: (3) \$10 gift cards (\$30 value)
- Cousin's Subs: (5) free sub gift certificates (\$25 value)
- Capitol View Events, LLC: \$375 volunteer appreciation award

## Sustainability

Our emphasis on the importance of sustainability is ongoing from Orientation to the close of service. We address these issues in webinars, newsletters, and site visits. We expect that both the supervisor and the VISTA are accountable for ensuring that sustainability is a priority. This quarter, we feel we have addressed sustainability through the following ways.

-We have 7 continuing members this quarter who are working to scale up from the previous year's efforts; and given their familiarity with the community and the work, they are able to continue to build on the previous year's success. Additionally, we continue to encourage them to transition ownership of some of last year's projects to staff or other volunteers. Josh Cowles, serving at the Fond du Lac Public Library, reports that the Opportunity Center is functioning very smoothly with the help of their regular volunteers and he is slowly transitioning the oversight of the program to these volunteers and other library staff. This is allowing him to work on other community outreach and partnership building for the library. Brittany Williams, serving with the Madison GEAR UP program, has been working with her Parent Advisory Board (PAB) to plan for the next school year and assume leadership of organizing and implementing family partnership activities. This group of parents and GEAR UP staff are organizing a series of parent workshops for the spring and a second Parent Field trip to a college or university.

-Furthermore, we continue to see our work at the district level to be key to our efforts of sustaining partnerships in school districts. This quarter we have 11 VISTAs who are working with a district focus. This helps to build an infrastructure within the district to sustain partnerships and family involvement. Getting district leaders on board and helping to expand family involvement district wide ensures a greater sustainability than work at only one school. Our VISTAs at the district level often focus on individual schools but are all involved with other district initiatives to expand the impact beyond their school sites. We hope this effort will help our sites build capacity on a much larger scale.

-Finally, at the project level, we continue to develop and expand our Google Site (link included in the Attachments section of this report) so that VISTAs have ongoing and easy access to resources and announcements. We also involve 8 VISTAs in our monthly newsletter. These VISTAs pull together articles, work on the layout and distribute the newsletter to all members, supervisors and DPI staff. Credit for both of these efforts at sustainability goes to our VISTA Leaders who work to ensure that VISTAs are involved with the project, not just their sites.

## Multi-Site Performance

We communicate and monitor progress of all of our sites through bi-weekly reports, quarterly reports, VISTA Voices publications, site visits, regular check-ins from the VISTA Leaders and Project Coordinators, and monthly webinars.

In addition, we are working to increase the effectiveness of our supervisors by distributing a monthly Supervisor Shout-Out. The first edition was sent out in December and reviewed our expectations for VISTAs working during winter breaks. The

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Project Coordinator plans to send out a Shout-Out every month to provide supervisors with information and strategies for communicating with their VISTAs and helping to meet our expected performance measures.

Finally, one of the best ways to share the success of all of our sites is to share quotes from site staff, families members or community members that demonstrate the impact of the VISTAs' work. Quotes from five VISTA sites are below.

Ellen Carpenter, Madison School District

- "You have done here, what NMI (Nuestro Mundo, Inc.) has been trying to do for years. You've gotten parents and teachers here working together." - NMCS PT3 participant (a teacher)

- "The more that I read, the more that I feel that parent involvement is the most important thing for student success." -- Beyond the Bake Sale book group participant

- "In a perfect world, all educators and parents would read and enact the guidelines in this book." -- Beyond the Bake Sale book group participant

- "Parents, teachers and school leaders should be in this book group." -- Beyond the Bake Sale book group participant

- "We can't get parents to buy in unless staff members buy in [to partnerships]." -- Beyond the Bake Sale book group participant

Josh Cowles, Fond du Lac Public Library

- A volunteer related to me an experience helping a woman on a Saturday morning. She had been recently released from prison and had been living in a shelter making strides toward rebuilding her life (addiction recovery, counseling, etc.). She had to look for a job but she had never had a resume before and didn't know where to start. In the course of three hours, the volunteer helped her put together a starter resume, explained the basic job search process, and gave her a couple of books to check out from the Opportunity Center resource library about job searching for ex-offenders. My volunteer reported that the woman was extremely grateful and wanted me to know how much the Opportunity Center helped. On the way out, she gave the volunteer a hug.

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- Received from Opportunity Center Feedback Form:

My resume was old, outdated, and too long. With the assistance of Paul I have a new, much better, far more interesting resume I am proud to present to an employer. I will be back to work on a cover letter and use the online job searches! I think older employees (like myself) need that one on one assistance with these new online applications. Thank you for your assistance. I really had no idea where to go for help. A friend said this center was available. I am glad because I was getting very frustrated on how to even go about getting it done.

Amanda Shapiro, West Allis-West Milwaukee School District

- "Thank you for having the classes. It means so much to us." Parent referring to the ELL classes.

- "We don't want the classes to end. What can we do to keep the classes all year?" Several parents asked this question at the second to last ELL class.

- "Amanda, would you consider doing the VISTA program here next year?" Asked by Susan Stuckart and Tami Frana

Tracy Steffens, Washington Elementary School, Oshkosh

- Partner from the Oshkosh Public Library, though she refers to herself as "the Oshkosh Wallflower" expressed her joy working with our students and stated, "I have enjoyed the Lighted School House so much and I think this a wonderful calling for you."

- Sara Kroll, 2nd grade teacher e-mailed me back about content in my December VISTA Voices stating, "Thanks for the read aloud suggestions. I put them in my first newsletter for the New Year!"

Katrina Waldron, Madison School District

- "Katrina, I like seeing you all the time at our school!" --Tommy R., Midvale kindergarten student whose mother is in the Intercambio program.

- "It's amazing all the wonderful things going on at Midvale Lincoln. Great to have you as a part of it all" --Barbara Rubin, Lincoln IRT-Parents

- "It is so nice having you here and having you as our neighbor" --Angie Mortensen, Midvale ESL. Bilingual Resource Teacher

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### Other Accomplishments

#### Networking Meeting, November 30, Wisconsin Dells

At the end of November we gathered at a networking meeting which functioned to bring all VISTAs together face to face to share successes, challenges, and to build community. The day began with an orientation for 6 new VISTAs who began their service only the week before. The entire group arrived, and after a light ice-breaker activity, we did an Affinity Mapping activity. This got VISTAs thinking about the different skills, knowledge, beliefs, and values that one needs to be a VISTA. Interesting ideas were shared among the entire group and VISTAs were reenergized in their commitment to national service.

A substantial part of the day was committed to a Critical Friends activity. VISTAs were divided into groups of four and then learned a specific discussion procedure that allows for everyone's voice to be heard. Each person shared one challenge at their site and the other members of their group gave critical feedback and advice. VISTAs commented that they found this activity very useful and were able to go back to their sites with concrete ideas of action they could take.

To wrap up the day, we did a short talk about creating professional portfolios. VISTAs learn so many skills and have such diverse experiences during their year of service that this is a perfect opportunity to begin or update a portfolio.

#### Site Visits, October-November, statewide

Site visits were conducted by the Project Coordinator and the VISTA Leaders throughout the months of October-December for all summer start VISTA members. The purpose of the site visits were to check-in with the VISTA member and the site supervisor on the progress of the VISTA project. The visits were also a way to reconnect with the members and supervisors and provide feedback and support. Discussions on partnerships with the VISTA and supervisor were the main focus of visits. At new sites questions related to successes, challenges, support, and preparedness were addressed. At continuing sites questions related to successes, challenges, sustainability, and building on the previous year(s) were addressed.

#### End of Year Presentations

We are trying something new this year at the DPI VISTA Project thanks to the leadership of our VISTA Leaders. We are asking all VISTA members to develop and implement an End of Year Presentation to share the impact of their work on the site and community. The presentation is an effort to help the larger community realize the positive impacts VISTA has had on their community. It is also a time to gain new supporters while celebrating the work of the VISTA member. The actual presentation will likely come in many forms and VISTAs are encouraged to think creatively about what it might look like at their sites. We have encouraged VISTAs to consider ways to take advantage of other events, meetings, or family nights happening at the end of the year as ideal opportunities for them to present.

Included in the attachments section is a link to the document that was sent to VISTAs.

Finally, two of our former VISTAs have been nominated to serve on Superintendent Evers's Parent Leadership Corps, a group of parents from across the state who meet quarterly to advise Dr. Evers on educational policy issues.

### Stories

Heather Keyes has had enormous success with fundraisers, particularly the Breakfast with Santa and Winter Fest events at Indian Community School in Franklin. The Breakfast drew over 380 people and a profit of \$2,300. Families were also very helpful and 25 parents and students happily donated their time during the event. At the Winter Fest, for which Heather solicited numerous donations of prize items, the raffle brought in an impressive \$2,500.

Kathy Lewis, serving at Ashland High School, has been busy with a campaign to bring awareness of the Creating Caring Communities anti-bullying program to the wider community. Some of her efforts include a monthly newsletter for parents, blurbs for flyers, advertising in local newspapers, posters at various local establishments and creating personal connections. Additionally she hosted an information booth at events including the Gitchi Gami Pow Wow, parent-teacher conferences, Bad River Health Fair and 3 Family Meetings in Marengo Valley, Ashland and Bad River to ask parents to have a great role in decision making. She is more often being recognized in the community. This repeated exposure and presence of CCC efforts serves to create the necessary buy-in from the larger community. The gained trust and increased awareness has led to successful recruitment of individuals to support the program

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Kristen Donat's Family Math Night at Mitchell Elementary in Milwaukee focused on learning at home by providing families with math activities focused on learning numbers. Over 130 people attended this event which was a collaborative effort between COA Parent Involvement Coordinator, City Year, the Math Teacher Leader, and Kristen. Several parent and staff volunteers helped to lead the activities, serve food, and hand out the take home packets to each family. The take home packets, in English or Spanish, included tips on helping children with math, mathematical problem solving strategies, and questions that promote mathematical thinking. The games all focused on becoming familiar/friendly with numbers, and could be adapted to the child's grade/skill level. It was a successful and fun learning event for families and students alike.

Mike Valente shared this experience which points out his successful efforts and focus on sustainability at Clarke Street School in Milwaukee.

"By far the most rewarding thing I've heard this quarter came from Mr. Chaney, Clarke Street's representative at the MPS region parent meetings. As the parents went around, Mr. Chaney noted several positive things going on at Clarke Street School. Just about everything he mentioned I've had a hand in (newspaper, increased PTO attendance, regular calls home, attendance programs, the ATP, upcoming Math Night, etc.) He did not, however, mention me by name or single me out as the one responsible. It is very possible he did not know exactly who was responsible, and I liked that. Don't get me wrong, recognition is nice, but to me, this shows success on two levels. First, it reveals that stuff is actually getting done -- people are noticing progress. Secondly, and arguably just as important, it demonstrates that there are many people involved on many different levels. As such, sustainability will be more viable."

Katrina Waldron found another way to reach the Spanish speaking community about family, school, and community partnerships in the Madison school district. Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and La Movida Radio Station have teamed up to create a monthly 2-hour radio program called "¿Qué pasa en nuestras escuelas?" (translation: What's happening in our schools?). At one particular show, Katrina and several coworkers were invited to speak in Spanish about VISTA and family involvement currently occurring at Midvale-Lincoln Elementary School.

Since the return rate was low for an online survey about client satisfaction of the Job Help sessions at the Madison Public Library, Emily Minerath recognized that to reach her target audience she needed to revamp the survey procedure. This quarter, she sent out 114 surveys by mail and got about 40 back which was a much better sample. The best part was that the vast majority of them had positive things to say about the service and about the volunteers. They also report that they feel more able to handle the job search, use their resume, and contact employers. She was extremely proud of the great comments about the volunteers.

The English in the Schools program at the Madison School District was a big success for Ellen Carpenter this quarter. In a partnership with the Literacy Network, classes were offered twice a week where native Spanish speaking parents learned English and native English speaking parents learned Spanish. The two groups then came together to form conversation partners or an "intercambio" language exchange. Parents who participated soon got to know each other and learn about each others' language, culture, and family, while sharing the same interest of supporting their children's education.

To show the true impact that the Opportunity Center at Fond du Lac Public Library is having on the community, Josh Cowles shared this exchange:

"An e-mail from library staff:

Hello,

I believe it was Monday or Tuesday of this week that a gentleman approached me at the Help Desk for a bus schedule and wanted help trying to find Job Service.

He said he was unemployed and desperately looking for a job and did not know his way around Fond du Lac. He is staying at one of the shelters in town. I mentioned the Opportunity Center to him and took him downstairs and turned him over to the volunteer that was working. He was thrilled. I think he has been in every day since.

I just spoke to him a few minutes ago and asked him how it was going and he had very high praise for the Opportunity Center. He said they are very nice people and have really helped him out.

Two weeks later:

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Hello all,

The gentleman I emailed you about previously (who was so appreciative of all the help the Opportunity Center has given him) just stopped at the Help Desk to share his happy news that he starts work at Mercury Marine next week.

This quarter, Angela Rumsey has received overwhelmingly positive responses on evaluations about Milwaukee Public Schools district events. Parents seem to be getting a lot out of the workshops that have been held and are appreciative of their efforts and the efforts of the presenters. The evaluations also indicated that the topics and events that are offered are matching the needs of district parents.

One major success for Tracy Steffens this quarter was the Science Carnival Family Night at Washington Elementary School in Oshkosh. This event was excellent; even the local newspaper attended. A partnership with the UW Oshkosh Science Outreach allowed university teaching assistants to do fun science experiments with the families and students. Tracy received nothing but positive feedback; all those in attendance absolutely loved the event. Even now when students are asked what their favorite subject is, they mostly say science. The success of this event means that it will definitely happen again next year.

Brittany Williams was very pleased with the success of the parent field trip that she planned for parents in the GEAR UP program. The parents in attendance were able to visit Edgewood College, get a feel for what campus is like, and also hear from that school's admissions counselors. This really helped parents get an idea of what GEAR UP / EIP offers their students and gain more understanding of what they need to do in order to help their children get into college. Plus, parents were able to socialize a bit and continue to foster that sense of community within the GEAR UP / EIP program. All of the parents enjoyed themselves and said they would be happy to attend parent field trips in the future.

Emily Caragianis coordinated a Family Fitness Night and Food Fair at Cunningham Elementary School in Beloit. Families were invited to participate in fitness activities like rope climb, hula hoop contest, rock wall climbing, dance, exercise classes, and walking track. They also had the opportunity to learn about healthy food options from the 4-H and DPI which contributed nutrition displays and healthy snacks. The families really enjoyed this night of wellness and learning about healthy lifestyles.

Angie Domagalski is in the process of establishing a newsletter that will be distributed throughout the Metro Region at Milwaukee Public Schools that will highlight promising practices for parent engagement and to share ideas among staff and parents. Together with other VISTAs in the Milwaukee Public Schools she is also brainstorming ways to distribute a similar newsletter to all Regions and possibly make a District wide newsletter as well.

Amanda Shapiro has had wonderful success with the English language classes that she coordinated in West Allis-West Milwaukee. The instructor, Patricia, is fantastic, and the parents have begged her to continue the classes all school year long. The classes are not only important because they provide Spanish speaking parents with English lessons and tools to help their children succeed in school, but because they make the parents feel like they are part of the district. It makes a big difference for the parents to receive lessons from the school district, as opposed to another local organization, because they recognize that the district is invested in parents as well as their students.

Amanda Vandehey helped to coordinate a successful district-wide event in Wausau that focused on parent education, "F.U.N. In the Great Outdoors." This day helped build a strong reputation and awareness of the F.U.N. program throughout the district. Families enjoyed the morning activities together including learning about local wildlife while parents appreciated the opportunity to learn and gain valuable information related to their child's education. Each family also went home with a goody bag filled by community businesses.

Bix Firer has been working closely with the Milwaukee African American Immersion High School. When he first began, the school was going through many changes and had no Action Team, school governance, or connection with district parent engagement staff. Bix stepped in and within a few weeks of first making contact he had found support and assistance to help the school write an action plan for partnerships. Despite a late start, they've already begun working on several key objectives including monthly post cards to parents and a book club with the principal.

Juanita Peck has been focusing on sustainability since she started her service in the Altoona school district. She recognizes the challenges that the district has had in funding significant parent engagement programs in the past, so now she is committed to making every program cost effective and sustainable from the beginning. The relationships and contacts she is making in the

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district and within the community will support this mission well. She is starting by creating a large community map that is displayed in the hallway of the district office. This map points out the agencies and organizations in the community that might be good partners and will be a tool any staff can use to learn about Altoona and connect with the work Juanita is working.

To improve gaps in communication, Jon Peters has started a database for parent email addresses in Racine Unified School District. Previously they had some emails listed but they were only on emergency contact cards. He gathered more parent emails by sending out a request form to parents and now parents' emails are in a constant contact server for newsletters, student updates and other communications.

Jenne Orcutt has been working with the Grove Leaders of Tomorrow student leadership group at Grove Elementary School. This team has become highly valued at the school and involves a motivated group of students who promote ways to improve their school and community. Staff buy-in and support has increased for this group and she has recruited the social worker, principal, and parents to provide continued leadership.

This holiday season Brandon Jackson and the Milwaukee PTA decided to sponsor some low-income families that might otherwise not have much to celebrate. He partnered with several businesses such as Barnes and Nobel, Macy's and Build a Bear which donated a variety of children's books, games, as well as gift certificates. The PTA has agreed to continue supporting this family throughout the school year and intends to "adopt" a new family next year as well.

Amber Richardson has been busy establishing a solid advisory council for the Racine Public Library. The group that has emerged is very excited and enthusiastic about what has been happening at the library. Many partnering agencies that have become members of the advisory council have fresh ideas about what the library can do to support their clients better and are now more willing to refer people to visit the library for services such as job searching and English Language learning.

Bethany Bridges is getting ready to launch an exciting mentoring program for Black, male students at Wadewitz Elementary School in Racine. She has recruited over 15 professional, Black men from the local community who will visit the school weekly and tutor individual boys in academic learning in addition to serving as mentors. Parents of the students involved in the program must also be involved: they will be required to serve at least 3 hours volunteering at the school.

## Attachments and Links

Newsletters:

October/November Monthly Newsletter  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr10-10.pdf>

December Monthly Newsletter  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr12-10.pdf>

Press:

-The Family University Network was featured in an article in the December edition of Teaching Today.  
[http://www.wischoolnews.com/12\\_10.pdf](http://www.wischoolnews.com/12_10.pdf)

-The Family University Network was also featured in an article in the Wausau Daily Herald.  
<http://www.wausaudailyherald.com/article/20101109/WDH04/11090323/Moms-dads-head-to-school>

-Tracy Steffens coordinated a science night for families at her school that was featured in The Northwestern:  
<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/article/20101201/OSH0101/101130168/Science-carnival-explodes-with-fun>

-Washington Elementary School was recognized again later this quarter in The Northwestern.  
<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=201010010412>

-Here are some photos a family night at Wadewitz Elementary School.  
<http://secure.smilebox.com/ecom/openTheBox?sendevent=4d546b314e6a51344f5452384e4449354e5451304e6a413d0d0a&sb=1>

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### VISTA Voices:

<http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/vsitproj.html>

### End of Year Presentations:

<https://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/home/presentations>

### Attachments emailed to Program Officer:

- Mike Valente's (Clarke Street School, MPS) first Community Newspaper, published in December 2010.
- Parent Survey developed by Kristen Donat (Mitchell Elementary School, MPS).
- One Year Action Plan from Parent Advisory Board (GEAR UP, Madison).