

## AmeriCorps\*VISTA Progress Report

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**Grant Number:** 06VSNWI009

**Period Covered by this Report:**  
**From: 07/01/2010 to 09/30/2010**

### Data Updates

# of VISTA Members on board at end of reporting period	21
# of Community Volunteers serving who are Baby Boomers	70
Dollar value of cash resources developed by VISTA Members	3738
# of Service Hours performed by Community Volunteers	1087
Dollar value of non-cash resources developed by VISTA Members	5256
# of VISTA Members supported by cost share	0
# of Community Volunteers serving	273

### Member and Sponsor Development

	Americorps *VISTA Members	Supervisors	CNCS Funded	Funded by Other Source	Comments
On-Site Orientation	21	25	Y	N	
Community Outreach	21	25	Y	N	
Community Volunteer Generation/Recruitment	21	10	Y	N	
Effective Volunteer Management	21	0	Y	N	
Resource Mapping	21	25	Y	N	
Resource Development/Fundraising	21	0	Y	N	
Grant Writing	18	0	Y	N	
Organizational Development	21	25	Y	N	
Performance Measures	21	25	Y	N	
Tracking Systems	21	25	Y	N	
Information Technology	21	25	Y	N	
Developing On-Site Orientations and Training Plans	0	25	Y	N	
Other (Please Specify)	21	25	Y	Y	IST (Green Lake), Orientation (Madison), Parent Leadership Conference (Madison)

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### Project Plan

Service Category: Other Education

#### Performance Milestone

##### Milestone

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

##### Planned Period of Accomplishment

September 2009-December 2009

##### Actual Period of Accomplishment

September 2010- December 2010

##### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Action Teams for Partnerships are established and members recruited.

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

100 %

##### Actual # or % to date

75 %

##### How Measured

Sign-in sheet

##### Description of Data Collection

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

##### Progress this Reporting Period

All continuing VISTAs and sites have action teams or similar groups that they are working with to sustain partnerships at their sites. New VISTAs are working to establish these groups and several already have teams up and running. We find that many VISTAs are using existing groups such as School Leadership Councils, PTOs, or Parent Teacher Councils to serve as their action team.

#### Performance Milestone

##### Milestone

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

##### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009-October 2009

##### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2010-October 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

All July and August start VISTAs have completed and submitted their asset maps. All continuing VISTAs updated their maps with new partners and connections they are making in their communities. Asset Maps are a critical piece to sustainability for all of our VISTAs.

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### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

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

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009-August 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2010-August 2011

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of grants submitted.

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

20 #

#### Actual # or % to date

3 #

#### 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

Our goal is for each VISTA to write and submit one grant during the course of their service year. This quarter, three VISTAs submitted grants including Amanda Vandehey who submitted a Beyond Pencils and Crayons grant to a Community Foundation in Wausau, and Ellen Carpenter, who submitted a grant to the Target Education Foundation.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

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

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009-August 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2010-August 2011

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Number of activities/practices implemented.

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

120 #

#### Actual # or % to date

30 #

#### 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. Each VISTA will coordinate at least six family-school-community events or initiatives throughout the year.

#### Progress this Reporting Period

VISTAs, new and continuing, are planning and implementing activities that create, build, and sustain partnerships. School, district, and library VISTAs all developed programs this quarter to help families experience a connection to their children's learning AND help unemployed individuals gain access to resources on job searching, resume building and interviewing.

Brittany Williams, serving in Madison with the GEAR UP program, held Parent Orientation sessions at all four

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schools the program serves. These sessions helped parents understand how to get involved with the program and also offered them the opportunity to join the Parent Leadership Board.

Josh Cowles, serving at the Fond du Lac Public Library, held a Job Smart U course on changing careers, taught by a volunteer and attended by individuals in the community, who, after experiencing layoffs, were looking for training in new careers and job opportunities.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

Sites will have an identified process for partnerships that includes the Action Team for Partnerships.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

July 2010

#### 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

UPDATE surveys will not be available until June 2011. Action Plans will be due in May 2011.

### Performance Milestone

#### Milestone

More families and community members will feel welcome in their children's school, have an understanding of the importance of being involved in their children's learning, and know how to participate to help their children.

#### Planned Period of Accomplishment

October 2009 and July 2010

#### Actual Period of Accomplishment

Quarterly

#### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

Increase in the percent of families indicating positive attitudes on end of year survey

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

20 %

#### Actual # or % to date

20 %

#### How Measured

Pre/Post test

#### Description of Data Collection

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VISTAs will survey at least 25 parents at the beginning of the school year to determine base-line data and survey 25 parents again at the end of the school year to determine progress. At least 20% more parents will indicate a positive increase.

### Progress this Reporting Period

Our efforts to address this performance measure has changed since the submission of our new grant renewal in August 2010. However, we did still collect data from VISTAs at continuing sites regarding parent input and feedback. We expect all VISTAs to submit evaluation results in quarter 1. VISTAs were able to gather input on how family friendly parents thought their school was, when they would be most likely to attend events and learning programs, and what kind of skills they would like to learn to help their children succeed in school. Example of one survey is attached to this report.

### The community need statement

From the research we know that when families are involved in their children's learning, 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. We also know that the more parents can advocate for their children, the better their children do in school and the longer they stay in school (Epstein and Henderson, et. al.). VISTAs focus on schools identified for improvement (SIFI) under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. When students perform better in school and successful graduate from high school, increasing amounts of economic opportunity will be open to them. Additionally, because Wisconsin has been identified as having the largest achievement gap between students of color and their white peers, strong family partnerships is one way we can improve the educational experiences of all students and families.

### 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 VISTAs will coordinate family partnership activities that address the cultural and racial diversity of the site.

### Planned Period of Accomplishment

August 2009-August 2010

### Actual Period of Accomplishment

August 2010-August 2011

### Indicator/Evidence of Progress

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

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

20 #

### Actual # or % to date

2 #

### 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 are working to help families and staff bridge cultural gaps that exist at the sites. This is done through

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things like programs, learning nights, and other community events. For example, Ellen Carpenter helped to organize Nuestro Mundo's Community Night- which addressed the diversity in the community by offering Latino community resources, food, music, and role models, as well as child care, transportation and translation services, all for free. The speakers (prominent Latino community members) spoke about the importance of being involved in the school as a parent.

### Performance Milestone

**Milestone**

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**

August 2009-August 2010

**Actual Period of Accomplishment**

August 2010-August 2011

**Indicator/Evidence of Progress**

Number of donations received.

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

50 #

**Actual # or % to date**

54 #

**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 50 donations this quarter, which has already surpassed our YEARLY goal of 50. 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. Amanda Vandehey in Wausau solicited over \$2,000 worth of in kind donations from various sources including local businesses like Culvers and Kraft Foods.

### Performance Milestone

**Milestone**

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

**Planned Period of Accomplishment**

July 2010

**Actual Period of Accomplishment**

July 2011

**Indicator/Evidence of Progress**

At least 75% of our sites will indicate 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**

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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**

UPDATE surveys will not be available until June 2011.

## Narratives

### Challenges

We faced and addressed three different challenges this quarter. The first was the time frame for recruiting November start VISTAs. We had planned to recruit only 3 VISTAs but after our State Office reviewed the numbers, we were asked to recruit 6. This added an additional burden for us but we were able to fill all 6 slots and will be welcoming 6 qualified VISTAs to our corps in mid November. We were also able to develop 2 sites as cost-share.

Our second challenge was securing host sites in Milwaukee for our August start VISTAs. Because we are aiming to take a more district level approach in Milwaukee we attempted to place VISTAs at a regional level (the district itself is divided into 7 regions). This was a challenge to secure the buy-in, support, and identify a supervisor. However, we were able to secure all positions by mid July and placed two VISTAs in schools and one VISTA at the regional level to join our other two VISTAs already working on the district level. We hope that we have the ground work laid to continue to place VISTAs at a regional or district level in Milwaukee.

Our final challenge involved holding individual school site principals accountable for VISTAs placed at the district level. Particularly in Madison and West Allis, our VISTAs are placed through the district office but work very closely with select schools. This year, we invited school level principals to attend Orientation to ensure that they understood our project, our performance measures, and expectations. While all were not able to attend, the Project Coordinator will travel to the individual schools to provide individualized orientation so that the VISTA is supported not only on the district level but also the school level. This approach has been successful so far and we will work to continue to hold all supervisors and staff who work with VISTAs accountable for progress.

### Recruitment

This was a very successful quarter for us in terms of recruitment. We were able to place twelve new VISTAs in July and August including one VISTA who had served a summer term with our program. Additionally, we had nine VISTAs renew their service for a second year (or extend their service for six months) including our two VISTA Leaders, Kristine Nadolski and Becky Smith. Our candidates are particularly strong for this year and we look forward to seeing the impact they have on their communities. VISTAs are serving in Ashland, Beloit, Fond du Lac, Franklin, Oshkosh, Madison, Milwaukee, Racine, Wausau, West Allis-West Milwaukee, and Wisconsin Rapids. We are thrilled especially with the number of continuing members we have in our corps this year. This adds to the experience and leadership of our VISTAs and our returning members have made themselves a resource to our new members. Not only did they help to present at our Orientation at the end of September but they were also involved in facilitating sessions at In Service Training in Green Lake and will continue to be leaders throughout the next year.

In addition, much work was done in this quarter to recruit an additional six members to begin service in November. Thanks to the efforts of our VISTA Leaders, we had over fifty applicants for our positions. These members will serve in Altoona, Milwaukee, Racine, and Wisconsin Rapids.

We were also able to recruit two sites who will participate in cost sharing for the next year- Racine Unified School District and the Milwaukee PTA. This is our first cost-sharing experience and we will continue to develop more cost- sharing opportunities across the state to increase the impact of our work.

### Training/Technical Assistance Needs

Our VISTAs requested the following kinds of trainings this quarter: grant writing, leadership training for parents, Parents and Teachers Talking Together (PT3), conflict resolution, diversity, using online forums, elevator speeches, and creating a school newsletter.

Most of these requests we are able to address through DPI's annual Parent Leadership Conference on September 29, 2010 but also by linking one member to another who has had experience in that particular area. In addition, we offered a Grant Writing Webinar on October 19th for those VISTAs who missed the Grant Writing Webinar at In Service Training (IST) in Green Lake. We are planning to offer a diversity training in the spring to address the need for unpacking privilege and understanding cultural differences.

We are also connecting VISTAs with other statewide resources like WI Facets and Parents Plus, who already do quite a bit of training on topics that interest VISTAs and their sites.

## Narratives

In addition, as a project, we think our work would be strengthened if more support was given for supervisors on a state level. Though DPI, Wisconsin Campus Compact, and UW- Extension began to discuss the possibility of a supervisor networking meeting, it would benefit us to have other opportunities for our supervisors. If occasional webinars were offered by the state office or if we could send more supervisors to PSO, we feel the buy in and support would greatly increase. We do a great deal to support our supervisors but the opportunity to hear from others involved in national service is of great help to them when usually their network involves only other K-12 educators or support staff.

Though DPI is committed to continuing to work with other VISTA programs in the state to provide more support for supervisors, we hope this is something staff might consider on a state and national level.

### Partnership/Collaboration Development

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. Our In Service Training (IST) was done in partnership with Wisconsin Campus Compact and the WI State Office and offered 3 days of quality training to over 70 VISTAs from 9 different projects.

We have also connected with WICC and UWEX to consider opportunities for our supervisors to network and learn from each other. At the VISTA Sponsor meetings over the summer we planned a fall Supervisor meeting that ultimately, while we had to cancel, helped us start to envision how we can bring our supervisors together to better support the work of our VISTAs. We are now planning a spring VISTA Supervisor Networking meeting to provide training and resource sharing to Supervisors from all three projects. We also anticipate opening this session to any VISTA supervisor in Wisconsin.

Additionally, one of our main priorities of our new grant is partnership development on the part of the VISTAs. While we have always emphasized the importance of partnerships, one of our new performance measures asks each VISTA to create at least 6 partnerships over the course of the year and document this partnership in bi-weekly and quarterly reports. Every two weeks we ask for updates on partnerships from each VISTA and expect that they will easily create more than 6 partnerships through their work in schools, districts, and libraries. Partnerships are not only key to sustainability but enable the VISTAs to map community assets and build strong programs with input from all stakeholders.

### Resource Development

This quarter, VISTAs have generated over \$8900 worth of cash and in kind donations.

In particular, Amanda Vandehey in Wausau raised over \$2,100 in in-kind donations including:

Day's Bowl A Dome: \$500 of coupons for free bowling  
Gander Mountain: \$1,000 Gander Bucks  
Bigby Coffee: Beverage Coupons \$200  
Wausau Fire Department: Pencils and stickers  
Culver's: 4 coupons for a free kid's meal -- approximately a \$20 value total  
Fiskars: Scrapbooking/crafts items (door prize) - 7 items, \$125 value total  
Kraft Foods: Parmesan cheese -- 600 sample packets, \$90 value  
Janke Bookstore: 110 Hallmark Date Calendars  
First Impressions Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics: 150 goody bags, \$90 value  
Our Network for Education (O.N.E.): 90 notepads, \$100 value  
Wausau/Central Wisconsin Convention & Visitors Bureau: 100 Visitors Magazine  
Wisconsin Public Service (WPS): 165 environmental erasers; 75 jar openers; brochures; kids magazines - \$65 value

Also, Nicole Stachurski generated over \$2160 in cash and non cash resources including:

Taco John's- free kids meals coupons, free taco coupons, and free six pack and a pound all valuing about \$60.00.  
Rocky Rococo Pizza- free pizza coupons valuing \$30.00.  
Paint Donations for USA Map totaled about \$150.00 from Pitsch Elementary.  
Culver's donated Free Ice Cream Coupons valuing \$40.00.  
Walmart gave a \$20.00 Gift Card.

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Stencil Donation for USA Map valued at \$350.00.  
\$200.00 of donations were gathered from Grove Elementary families for our ACT Playground Basket Raffles.  
\$1190.00 with the Basket Raffles for ACT Playground

Other VISTAs also received sizeable donations (Kathy Lewis; \$2,000) and generated a great deal of resources for programs and events (Heather Keyes; \$970).

## Sustainability

Sustainability continues to be a priority for our sites and VISTAs. This quarter, we feel we have addressed sustainability through the following ways.

We have 9 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 move quickly as the new school year begins. Additionally, they have been able to transition ownership of some of last year's projects to staff or other volunteers. Tracy Steffens in Oshkosh has been particularly insightful in how she is thinking about sustainability and has purposely been scaling back her involvement in particular programs to give more ownership to volunteers and staff.

Additionally, we see our work at the district level to be key to our efforts of sustaining partnerships in school districts. This year we have 8 VISTAs who are working at some level with a district focus. This helps to build an infrastructure within the district to sustain this kind of work. 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 have added a performance measure this year that each district VISTA do one 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.

We hope this effort will help our sites build capacity on a much larger scale.

Finally, 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 for the service year and check in regularly on the progress of creating shared ownership for the work the VISTAs are doing.

## Multi-Site Performance

We use the following methods to track performance of all of our sites:

### Bi-weekly Reports

These reports are submitted every two weeks (with some exceptions) and provide the VISTA the opportunity to update DPI on their progress, major projects, successes, and challenges. These reports are reviewed by the Project Coordinator and VISTA Leaders and feedback is provided to each VISTA. Additionally, these are used as tools for the supervisors to check in with their VISTA and we encourage supervisors to share these reports with other staff and the community.

### Quarterly Reports

These reports are submitted every three months and provide both the Supervisor and the VISTA the opportunity to share accomplishments and successes. These reports are read carefully and used to submit our Progress Report each quarter.

### Monthly Check-In webinars

Webinars are conducted once per month to allow VISTAs to check in with each other and hear about resources from DPI. Each webinar focuses around a topic including "branding" VISTA, volunteer management, Getting to Know Your Community, and sustainability.

### Site Visits

The Project Coordinator and both VISTA Leaders visit each VISTA site once per year- usually in the Fall. This meeting is with the supervisor and VISTA (and if the VISTA serves in a school, with the principal) to hear about individual progress,

## Narratives

success and challenges.

Additionally, here at DPI we do several things to help provide extra support to the members and supervisors. We maintain a Google Site with resources, materials to download and updates for all members. This site is maintained by the VISTA Leaders. We also send out a monthly newsletter to all VISTAs and Supervisors which features articles and insights from members, community partners, and other DPI staff. Finally, we maintain two list serves for VISTAs to be able to share resources and communicate with each other. One list serv is for our members and supervisors only (along with some DPI staff) and the other is for all VISTAs in the state (in addition to some supervisors and state office staff).

Finally, below are quotes collected from VISTA sites that illustrate their performance and impact:

Josh Cowles, Fond du Lac Public Library

"Very helpful and individualized." -- regarding Job Smart U workshops

I'm so grateful for the help. I would have given up hope by now and turned away in disgust. Now I'm gaining confidence and skills."-Opportunity Center User

"The persons volunteering in the center are knowledgeable, helpful and morale boosters."--Opportunity Center User

Kristen Donat, Mitchell Elementary School, Milwaukee

Kristen is an amazing self-starter and has a very strong work ethic.--Staff Member

Kristen is very passionate about making a difference here at Mitchell and is really dedicated to making a lasting effect on this community!--Staff Member.

Kathy Lewis, Ashland High School

You're a little but important cog in this massive machine that we call AHS. Keep up the great work!--Supervisor

Emily Minerath, Madison Public Library

"I'm more confident now. I've gotten a lot of things done with help they've given me." -Job Center User

The following are all off the surveys Emily has clients do after their first appointment:

"Very helpful. I've been re-writing and tweaking my cover letter for more than a year. Very helpful to have a fresh perspective."

"I would really like to thank all who are a part of teaching others about the world of computers."

"Very helpful and encouraging, very knowledgeable staff"

Nicole Stachurski, Grove Elementary School, Wisconsin Rapids

"You have helped make the school more like a family."-Staff member

Mike Valente, Clarke Street School, Milwaukee

"Here he is, the one we've been waiting for" -- Principal Blue's introduction of me at the open house.

"You are doing a wonderful job" -- Staff member.

Katrina Waldron, Midvale/Lincoln Elementary School, Madison

"Katrina's energy and competency has a significant impact on Midvale's move toward our goals. I appreciate her leadership in getting Intercambio off the ground. She attends to details as well as long range goals --and I have already heard many staff commenting on her skills!" --Principal Teresa Carranza, Midvale Elementary School.

"Thank you for meeting with Barb and me this morning. I've been so impressed with all your efforts so far, and know that we are very lucky to have you at Midvale-Lincoln." --Mary Klehr, UW Professional Development Student Coordinator for Midvale-Lincoln Elementary.

"Thanks for your notes and enthusiasm." --Barb Rubin, Lincoln Elementary School's Instructional Resource Teacher

## Other Accomplishments

In-Service Training -- Green Lake, WI, September 22-24, 2010

An In-Service Training was held in September, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Campus Compact VISTA Project, for all new and returning VISTAs in Wisconsin. This retreat served as an excellent opportunity for VISTAs from across the state to network with each other, share resources and celebrate the beginning of the new VISTA term. The workshop sessions

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provided basic training in many of the skills that VISTAs will utilize during their service. Session topics included: volunteer management, service learning, grant writing, fundraising, project management, and creating partnerships. VISTAs also participated in reflection activities like the "chalk talk," World Café, and Open Spaces where they discussed with fellow VISTAs about various themes such as community building, national service, living on a budget, and eliminating poverty. These activities were well received and provided an opportunity for VISTAs to share their perspectives while also learning from others. VISTAs expressed that they were pleased with the variety and quality of workshop offerings as well as with the advantages of networking early on in their service term with VISTAs from across the state.

### DPI VISTA Orientation -- Madison, WI, September 28

DPI VISTA Orientation took place on September 28 in Madison, WI. The purpose of the Orientation was to introduce the VISTAs to the mission, goals, and background of the DPI Project and to give them more in depth training of the skills and knowledge that is required. The school and district VISTAs focused on the research of the Six Types of Family Involvement for Successful Partnerships and how to create, implement, and evaluate an Action Team for Partnerships. VISTAs participated in interactive activities that allowed them to understand more deeply the benefits of this framework and explore how they might implement it at their sites. Library/economic recovery VISTAs received training and information about public library systems and strategies of how to best serve the job-help needs of the community where they are placed. VISTAs also had an opportunity to meet with each other, share challenges and successes, and receive feedback and advice from their fellow VISTAs.

Supervisors also attended a separate, but similar, orientation in which they learned about the mission, goals, and background of the DPI Project. We also shared with them specific information about how to effectively supervise a VISTA while maintaining the regulations and framework that VISTAs must follow. A panel of experienced VISTA supervisors concluded the evening and allowed new supervisors to ask questions and receive important feedback.

All VISTAs were required to attend the Parent Leadership Conference the following day and were encouraged to bring parents and staff from their sites. The conference, sponsored by DPI, was a successful way to share new and important information about family involvement in children's education. Among the various session topics, some included: PTAs, math, literacy, English language learners, public school funding, and creating successful partnerships. Several VISTAs indicated that this conference sparked important conversations and spurred further action with their staff and parents about topics of parent leadership and involvement.

### Library Sites

Because we are not able to access our new performance measures with this progress report, we wanted to share some of the success of our library sites in particular, as they are not represented well enough in the report. Our three library sites are all continuing (one with the same VISTA) and have already begun to build on last year's success. These sites are focusing on job development and economic recovery in their communities; in addition to organizing resources for low income individuals and helping to eliminate barriers for community members to use and take advantage of the library.

Our library VISTAs were able to meet with DPI's public library development team during Orientation to learn about potential resources and ideas for creating programs and providing services. They also connected with the Middleton Public Library during Orientation as one staff member came to speak about how they have developed a strong relationship with the local school system and how school-library partnerships might be approached and developed. Training provided at Orientation was done by request of the VISTAs and helped them receive resources specific to their work.

We continue to provide library-specific resources through the new and improved Google Site, the monthly newsletter, and webinars. Josh Cowles, a second year VISTA member, has offered to contribute articles to the newsletter that pertain to library work which will help VISTAs learn from each other.

Below are three additional "stories" from our library VISTAs that help to illustrate the impact they are having on library users and community members.

Josh Cowles shares a successful summer program called Art in Action. A summer youth leadership program in partnership with the Volunteer Center, UW-Extension, Boys & Girls Club, and the Fond du Lac Public Library and other area VISTAs, it

## Narratives

provided opportunity for middle-school age kids to participate in a leadership curriculum and design and paint a mural on one of FDLPL's bookmobiles.

Emily Minerath is offering the following kinds of services across the city of Madison not only in library branches but also community centers: 1 on 1 job assistance, MS Word workshops, workshops on hard and soft skills (time management, goal setting), resume writing and interviewing skills. The variety of these programs offer a lot of options to community members in Madison and ensure that they can find a free resource that is useful to them. Emily continues to look for ways to expand these programs to even more sites across the city.

Amber Richardson has spent a great deal of time determining community needs since she began her term. She has interviewed several community leaders and spoken with local librarians about the types of things that they think the public needs and would like to see from the library. This data was useful not only as she was completing her asset maps but also as she determined the kinds of programs she might want to implement. Through her interview process it was revealed that most people need basic computer skills and assistance in filling out forms online. This will be a central piece of the kind of assistance Amber coordinates at the library.

## Stories

Heather Keyes, serving at the Indian Community School in Franklin, is working with the Action Team for Partnerships to provide structure, input, and support to the members. During this quarter her main goal has been to make sure that the Action Team sees her as a viable and useful resource. With this in mind, she attends all Action Team meetings and is in frequent contact with the officers, which include school staff, parents, and community members.

Kathy Lewis, serving at Ashland High School in Ashland, has had great success organizing and training volunteer tutors during this quarter. All of the tutors have gone through an orientation which emphasizes a relational-based program, while maintaining academically rigorous tutoring practices. She has also networked with Upward Bound and the Native American Society Association of Northland College. She continues to look to extend her efforts and volunteer base and most recently has established a partnership with the Bad River Public Tribal Library.

Kristen Donat, at Mitchell Integrated School for the Arts in Milwaukee, in her mission to create a Parental Math Intervention Program, is utilizing the experiences, knowledge and ideas that others have, in hopes of creating investment from the start. She recognizes that community members, staff, families, and students need to be involved even at the planning stage so as to create sustainability from the beginning.

Mike Valente, at Clarke Street School in Milwaukee shares the following: "My first few weeks were full of first impressions. I like to think I made a lot of good ones -- which I count as a success. Specifically, the impression I feel I made on Mr. Bell, the man in charge of the Parent Center at Clarke Street School. Because my position will have me dealing a lot with parents, I wanted to make sure not to 'step on any toes' and make sure that Mr. Bell knew I was there to help, and not take over his job. I believe I got the message across as he seems happy to have help with many things he has to do. In reality, my presence will allow him to get out of his office and into the classrooms more often. In fact, when he heard I will not be at Clarke Street on Fridays, he seemed genuinely disappointed -- success!"

For Katrina Waldron, serving at Midvale and Lincoln Elementary Schools in Madison, the Parent Leadership Conference sponsored by DPI was a huge success because of the great Midvale and Lincoln representation by parents and staff. They connected well and began collaborating for a parent/staff group to address and brainstorm ways for parents to become more involved with their children's education and to improve communication between Midvale and Lincoln schools. Instead of parent "involvement" the group designated it to be called "parent empowerment." This group already has plans to meet again to continue the discussion and include more parents and staff of the two schools to begin a real collaboration.

Emily Minerath at the Madison Public Library has been integrating herself well into her project and site. She works hard to keep the job help programs running smoothly at the several library branches across the city. She also has recruited several new

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volunteers and instructors and has established a new job help center in partnership with another local agency located in a high-need neighborhood.

Casey Burns, at the Milwaukee Public School District, is very optimistic this year after she took steps to improve organization and communication with the District Advisory Council and Regional meetings. Since she's streamlined the database and improved the process and meeting logistics for the DAC (which is comprised of parents from all Title I schools in the district), the amount of parent participation will likely increase this year.

Ellen Carpenter, serving at Sennett Middle School and Nuestro Mundo Elementary School, has been busy collecting a large amount of data from surveys that she and the Action Teams for Partnerships at her schools developed. A total of 405 completed surveys have been collected. They are proving to provide valuable information for the Action Teams and leadership at both schools.

Josh Cowles, serving at the Fond du Lac Public Library, was very pleased that the library director Ken Hall received a "Friend of Education" award from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Evers, in September. The award recognized several projects that Josh was integral in creating, including the Opportunity Center and Job Smart U. We are very encouraged to see the Fond du Lac library recognized for this accomplishment.

Angela Rumsey, serving at Milwaukee Public School District, is optimistic that the Action Team for Partnerships process will continue and really benefit the schools in her district. Learning from last year, she has helped to update and revise the Action Team facilitation process so that schools receive the support they need from the district. Schools are already following through with their plans.

Nicole Stachurski has seen the success of the VISTA project's growth at Grove Elementary School in Wisconsin Rapids. For example, last year's "Prize Patrol" had about 50 participants and this year's had 152. They also had the biggest turnout she's seen for the "Back-to-School" Picnic and "PTC Meetings". Finally, her GID (Grove Information Distribution) went from about 50 email addresses to almost 100 this year. These successes are a result of her efforts to create many personable interactions and positive connections of encouragement, informing and recruiting.

Tracy Steffens had a successful "Back to School Family Night" at Washington Elementary School in Oshkosh. While parents saw a presentation about report cards, attendance policy, parent involvement policy, and other important information, the students enjoyed games that helped to illustrate safe play. Over 140 students and family members attended the event.

Brittany Williams, serving with GEAR UP in Madison, has been pleasantly surprised with both the recruitment and turnout at O'Keeffe Middle School this quarter. She was responsible for recruitment during its registration sessions last year and remembers how unwelcoming the culture of the school was for GEAR UP. She noticed the change in perception of the program during registration this year and believes that it has a lot to do with increased buy-in from the principal, along with certain changes GEAR UP has made to make the program more appealing to the demographics at O'Keeffe. So far, the number of students that have attended workshops at O'Keeffe has exploded.

Bethany Bridges, serving at the Racine Unified School District, had a successful Family Corn Roast event with over 360 parents and students in attendance. She received various donations from local businesses and also had several staff members volunteer their time. Families came to hear about how to help their children be successful in school while the students enjoyed games on the playground.

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At Cunningham Elementary in Beloit, Emily Caragianis has successfully convinced the principal to dedicate a space in the school to a Family Center. This shows that the school administration is buying into the idea that in order for there to be meaningful family involvement, they have to show families that they are welcomed and valued. Families are excited to be involved with the construction of a family center, and Emily sees it as a great way to get more families connected with the school now and in years to come.

Angie Domagalski, serving with the Milwaukee Public Schools Metro Region, has been reinforcing the importance of Action Teams at each of the high schools in her region. School principals and social workers are proving to be important partners in getting the Action Team process implemented at their schools and Angie continues to strengthen those relationships.

Amber Richardson, at the Racine Public Library, has been busy creating a year-long plan that will outline her work. She has designated each month to focus on outreach to a specific marginalized population. She has also concluded that a Community Resource Center would be most beneficial to people in the area. She envisions the Community Resource Center as a space where people in crisis will be able to not only apply for jobs and receive resume help, but will also have the support and guidance to apply for FoodShare, BadgerCare, unemployment and other social services.

Amanda Shapiro, serving at the West Allis -- West Milwaukee School District, recognizes the importance of Spanish language skills at her site, especially because the Hispanic/Latino/Mexican population is over 30% in her district. Using her limited Spanish, she introduced one Spanish speaking parent to the Spanish speaking intern working at Longfellow Elementary. The parent was so relieved to have someone help her fill out the school forms that day. On the first day of school, that same parent recognized Amanda and gave her a big hug.

At the Wausau School District, Amanda Vandehey established a new community partnership with the Home Depot. They agreed to offer their "Kid's Workshop" as an evening event for the Family University Network that is hosted by the district. All elementary families in the district will be invited to attend this fun, unique event.

### Attachments and Links

Google Site: <https://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/>

July newsletter: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr07-10.pdf>

August newsletter: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr08-10.pdf>

September newsletter: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/vnwsltr09-10.pdf>

Wisconsin State Journal Article: [http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/article\\_f225b75c-c1f9-11df-bca3-001cc4c002e0.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/article_f225b75c-c1f9-11df-bca3-001cc4c002e0.html)

The Northwestern Article: <http://www.thenorthwestern.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=201010010412>

Pictures from Bethany Bridge's Family Night (Racine):

<http://secure.smilebox.com/ecom/openTheBox?sendevent=4d546b314e6a51344f5452384e4449354e5451304e6a413d0d0a&sb=1>

2010 Promising Partnership Practices (featuring several WI VISTAs including Tracy Steffens and Nicole Stachurski):  
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/index.htm>

Emailed separately to Program Officer: 1) Parent Survey from Amanda Shapiro, 2) F.U.N. Brochure from Amanda Vandehey, 3) GEAR UP Newsletter from Brittany Williams, 4) Book Group Flyer from Ellen Carpenter, and 5) Opportunity Center Feedback Form from Josh Cowles