

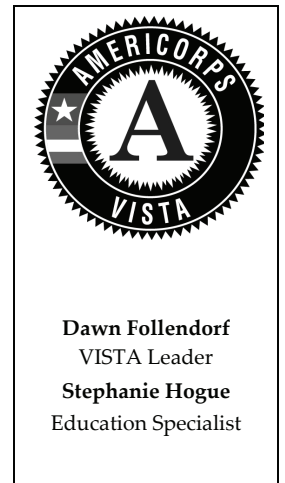


# DPI VISTA Monthly

May/June 2007

*"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."*

Thomas Edison



## Partnership Team Reflection and Evaluation

Dawn Follendorf

The months of May and June may be just the right time to reflect on partnership teams you've been building and strengthening while the process of doing so is fresh in your mind. Following are just a few categories and questions one might want to consider while reflecting on the successes teams have had, and areas in which teams could improve.

### Team Goals:

- Has the team developed goals that reflect the school's vision and improvement goals?
- Have these goals been reviewed at the year end?
- To what extent have the goals been accomplished?
- How is this accomplishment being measured (if possible at this time)?
- Has the necessary planning for the upcoming school year taken place?
- Will these goals need to be adjusted in the future?

### Activity Assessment:

- What were successful activities that were implemented?
- How was this success measured?
- What would the group do differently in the future?
- Are the activities targeted towards accomplishing the goals that were set?

### Team Membership:

- Is the team's demographic make up reflective of the student body?
- How are team members appreciated for their contributions?
- If recruitment is necessary, is there a "system" in place?

### Team Partnerships:

- What new family and community partnerships have been established and for what purpose?
- What made these partnerships effective?
- What is the current status of these relationships and how are they being maintained?
- Is the relationship reciprocal? How can the team/school help them to accomplish their mission?
- How can the partnership be expanded or strengthened?

### Team Publicity:

- To what extent is the team known by the school and outside community?
- Do materials exist that describe its goals?



## Birthday this Month:

*Be sure to send some birthday wishes!*

**Amy Owen**

a.owen@parentspluswi.org  
(May 28)



## Money Saving Tip of the Month: **Freebies Hodge-Podge!**

When I was in college I once saw a Japanese game show, the premise of which involved people who started out with nothing but an internet-connected computer. The goal was for them to procure everything they needed – food, clothing, and I believe housing and a job – through free online offers and the like. While it may seem silly and frivolous, with a little research you could supplement your modest VISTA incomes quite nicely by free samples and other offers. (I don't want to advocate any particular products here, though, and beware of anything that requires a lot of personal information!)

We've explored sites like [freecycle.org](http://freecycle.org) and [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org) in past newsletters, but also worth note is [freegan.info](http://freegan.info), where you can learn about the freegan lifestyle which, like the Japanese game show, takes freebies to (albeit philosophically different) extremes.

Finally, did you know that the national value of a volunteer (as calculated by Independent Sector) is \$18.77 an hour? (For some reason, the value is lower in Wisconsin – \$15.63 – but still considerably more than your living allowance compensates you!) Since getting paid to volunteer is a contradiction in terms, however, you may want to read more about time-based currency, alternative economies, and bartering programs – maybe there is one starting up or already established in your community. While the goods and services in such systems certainly aren't free, they certainly save you money! As an added bonus, it feels really validating to earn something rather than pay for it AND you're building community partnerships by participating.

## Ideas to Increase Summertime Reading



By Ruth Anne  
Landsverk

It's no accident that summer is one of the busiest times of year for children's librarians. Heavily-laden library shelves can be stripped down to a few items during the summer when books help fill kids' long and lazy days. But which children visit the library and, perhaps more importantly, which kids don't? Researchers have found that all children make reading gains at essentially the same rate during the school year, but that during the summer months, disadvantaged kids fall behind. As children age, these summer losses add up and contribute to the achievement gap between low- and higher-income children in elementary school. The loss in reading skills seems to be especially pronounced among low-income children from Kindergarten through Grades 3 or 4. Summer reading programs, especially for children during their first three or four years of school, could keep the achievement gap from growing.

How can VISTA volunteers work during the summer to keep children reading and help close the achievement gap? The answer – no surprise here -- lies in family-school-community partnerships. First, a little pre-summertime sleuthing is necessary. Now, before the school year ends, is a good time to sit down with your local public children's librarian and the librarian and/or reading teacher at your school to find out:

- What summer programs exist to help keep kids reading in your community?
- How can your school bring children to or increase attendance at summer reading programs? and

- How can you introduce books at wherever children gather during the summer, including summer school breakfast or lunch programs, family/community centers, after-school programs, and child care centers?

Following, are a few ideas for school-community collaboration on summer reading, some borrowed from other states:

**The Wisconsin Summer Library Program.** Last summer, 93% of all Wisconsin public libraries participated in the Summer Library Program. Most Summer Library Programs begin as soon as school lets out for the year, and, like the books and magazines children borrow from the library, are free. Programs include literacy development events that bring in special readers, musicians, performers, and informational speakers that connect with the program theme. Attendance at these events topped 400,000! Learn more about the program at <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/slp.html>.

In St. Louis, three full-time school staff members are charged with bringing the public library's summer reading club to at-risk students in the city's 80 public schools. Librarians in Columbus, Ohio, visit the public schools each spring to promote their summer reading programs, and the schools have helped librarians by encouraging at-risk students to participate and by filming TV commercials.

How can children attending summer programs at your school participate in the program, including addressing transportation needs? How can your school work with family centers and child care centers in your community to make this happen? Build bridges with your public library!

**Organize a Rummage Sale Reading book drive.** Many children don't have books at home to read during the summer and can't get to the public library without help. Barb Huntington, DPI Youth Library Consultant, encourages VISTAs to personally visit rummage or garage sales in their

communities with a special request: "Please consider donating your unsold children's books to our school for distribution to needy children during the summer." Leave a note at the garage sale with your contact name and number. Be ready to have a vehicle to pick up the books and a place to store them until they can be handed out to children for summer reading at the end of the school year.

**Partner with community organizations** such as the summer school food service program, the YMCA, or the Boys and Girls Club to provide books and volunteers to read to children during the summer. Reach out to kids wherever they are and make it easy for children (and their parents) to participate by providing transportation and free meals or snacks, and considering parents' work schedules. In Wisconsin, Appleton and Beloit offer free city bus passes to children riding to and from the library for summer reading programs.

**Involve parents!** A study by the Los Angeles Public Library found that parents – their children's first and longest-lasting teachers – were the most influential motivators for determining if children participated in a summer reading program. Successful summer reading programs provide a host of way for parents to be involved, including:

- Invite parents to program events and field trips
- Provide information on what children are reading, learning, and doing
- Offer parent workshops on how to develop good literacy habits in children
- Offer literacy tutoring for parents who need reading help
- Do or design take-home activities related to reading
- Ask parents, themselves, to serve as reading volunteers or, if funding is available, hire

parents to help with the summer reading program.

**Finally, recruit volunteers** to read to and with children. The children who may most benefit from summer reading programs are often those who most need someone else's help to read. Tap into existing resources like church groups, civic groups, or businesses willing to "adopt a reader" for the summer. College students home for the summer and high school and middle school students are often excellent volunteers. Check into the service requirements for graduation from high school in your community. Federal Work Study programs also pay college students to serve their communities.

Summer reading programs can be a wonderful way to grow community spirit, with everyone pulling together for a greater cause. The key is to tailor efforts to the location and needs of the children and families in your community who will most benefit from year-round literacy. Don't be afraid to be creative, be flexible, and to make reading fun!

This article includes some excerpts from *Building Effective Programs for Summer Learning* by Peter Johnson, America Reads Summer 2000 Intern, Yale University, available at [www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/sum\\_build.doc](http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/sum_build.doc).

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## Thoughts from the Youth Development Conference

article by Kate Goyette

Last month, I attended a conference at The Youth Arts Center with the Business and Economics Academy of Milwaukee students, some staff members and Kristina Gomez, another VISTA at Parents Plus. It was the Milwaukee Police Department-Milwaukee Public School (MPS) 7<sup>th</sup> District Youth Development Conference. It was for 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, and there were about 400 students in attendance.

This was by far one of the best conferences I've been to, and it was for the students! Working with Parents Plus, I've become familiar with many nonprofits and organizations, and I thought I would see the same ones at this conference. Through the workshops I attended, I learned about more organizations I had never heard of in the area that are doing positive things concerning gun violence and peer pressure. Project Ujimwa is a program that is partnered with Children's Hospital and every time a youth is shot and survives, he or she is connected to this organization. Two former gang members spoke to the students about how they used to live, how they got shot, and that the students should stay in school and always keep working toward something better. I also attended a workshop called Peer IMPACT put on by Riverside High School students. This is an extra-curricular at the high school that focuses on drug and alcohol prevention. They had a lot of interactive activities for the students and some good information too. Then I attended a workshop put on by Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) from the state Department of Justice. The presentation was very informative, and it was rather alarming to see how easy it is to access certain information about people, especially children, online.

The end of the conference was probably the best part and extremely emotional. Throughout, we were reminded of the recent tragedy at Virginia Tech, and only the night before one student that was supposed to be at the conference couldn't be there because he was shot and died over an argument. We had 30 seconds of silence for each tragedy.



*planting the seeds of positive change*

The speakers did a good job of reminding us of things that need to change, but that we need to be positive and help the change occur. The change can start if we start making small changes with our everyday actions. It can be as simple as being nice

to someone who wasn't expecting it or volunteering. In the case of extreme violence large changes are needed, but small ones are easy to do and are usually done with little expense to those who perform them. "The peace begins with each of us" was a common statement.

Students were then asked how many of them know someone who had been shot and half of the hands went up, and then they were asked how many of them hear gunshots in their neighborhoods and practically every hand went up. The thought that kept running through my mind was if you can hear bullets, then you have a chance of getting caught by one. That is a very scary thought, and the majority of those students deal with it in everyday life.

As the conference came to a close, two spoken word poets, Muhibb Dyer and Kwabena A. Nixon, came up and recited poetry that sounded more like a song since they played off each other's voices very well. The first one dealt with two innocent children, a young girl and a male high school student, who both died due to gang-related gun violence and that flowed into the aspects of Hurricane Katrina that were not covered by mainstream media and finally the war in Iraq. It was so powerful that many people started tearing up, including me. The next one focused on the problems of incarceration in Milwaukee and was very emotional as well. At the end, the poets had the students chant: "When I say love, you say life," and you could almost feel the relief in the room after listening to such intense poems.

Not many of the statistics people spoke of that day on the violence in Milwaukee were new to me, but I was given a reminder that positive change can occur and is occurring through many organizations in the city. I thought it was great that every speaker tried to encourage the students to take away something positive from the conference. They reminded them not to be ignorant of the problems in Milwaukee, but to see them clearly, and have the optimism needed to affect change. They emphasized that some things can change, and it can be simpler than you might think. So, let the peace begin with each one of us.

## Life After VISTA

By Stephanie Hogue



The other day, I received a fortune cookie fortune that read: **"Be flexible! Opportunities for success are all around you."** Normally, I don't place too much stock in fortune cookie fortunes, but I was really surprised about this particular one because I was just thinking about writing this very article about flexibility!

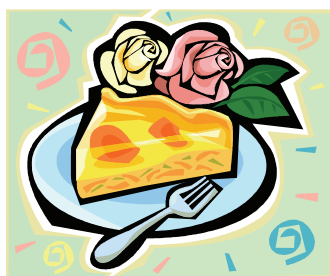
In a previous column, I focused on the stress and frustration of waiting, and for me this last waiting game (admissions to grad school) went far differently than I had expected. Just when I thought I had everything figured out, an opportunity I'd previously considered to be unavailable ended up availing itself to me. The pre-VISTA Stephanie might have missed out on this new opportunity because of the plans and commitments I'd already made and the "hassle" of thinking through a new decision after my mind had originally been made up. I realized how much VISTA has changed me when I actually began weighing my options and thoughtfully considering what would be best for me. Ultimately, I'm really happy that I allowed myself to be open to this new chance (and for all of the opportunities I've been afforded post-VISTA, for that matter – this job included!) It has made me think about how easy it is to get stuck on one thing or another, to tune out because something is coming to an end, and to miss out on really great things because of it (not that any of you would ever succumb to that!)

I know you're all firming up future plans and wrapping things up at your sites, but don't stop searching for those opportunities for success, in both your personal and professional lives. It isn't ever too late for the most amazing good fortune to fall into your lap if only you are open to it.

## Recipe of the Month

Stephanie Hogue

I don't know if you all have farmer's markets where you are, but the farmer's market here in Madison is one of my favorite things about living in this town! I love to try fruits and vegetables I've never even heard of before or to try new ways to prepare fresh favorites – May is a perfect time to sample ramps and morels, and June is great for kohlrabi and rhubarb, among others! I thought I'd share a recipe that takes advantage of local ingredients at the peaks of their seasons.



### Spring Quiche Trio

From *Simply in Season*

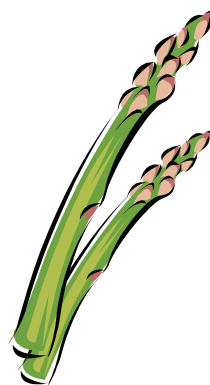
#### Potato crust:

**3 cups uncooked potatoes, coarsely grated**  
**3 tablespoons oil**

Mix together. Press into bottom and sides of a 9-inch pie pan. Bake in preheated oven at 425 degrees until just starting to brown, about 15 minutes.

**3 eggs**  
**1 cup evaporated milk**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**  
**¼ teaspoon pepper**

Beat together and set aside. Prepare selected filling below and pour into crust topped by egg-milk mixture and ending with a sprinkle of reserved cheese. Bake in preheated oven at 425 degrees for 15 minutes, reduce heat and bake until browned on top and set in the middle, another 25-30 minutes. Allow to cool for 10-15 minutes before cutting and serving. Serves 4-6.



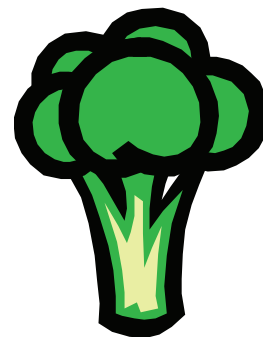
#### Asparagus filling:

**1 ½ cups asparagus, cooked and chopped**  
**1 cup Swiss cheese, shredded**  
**½ cup cooked bacon or ham (optional)**  
**¼ cup green onion or onion, chopped**  
**1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped**  
or  
**¼ cup fresh dill, chopped**

Mix together, adding herbs to egg-milk mixture.

#### Leek-spinach-broccoli filling:

**1 cup leeks, thinly sliced**  
**1 cup broccoli, chopped**  
**2 cups spinach, chopped**  
**1 cup Swiss cheese, shredded**  
**½ cup cooked bacon (optional)**



Saute leeks and broccoli together in a greased fry pan for 5-10 minutes. Add spinach and cook until wilted. Place bacon and cheese in bottom of crust, then top with vegetable mixture.

#### Ramp filling:

**1 ½ cups ramps (wild leeks), chopped**  
**1 cup cheese, shredded**



Layer into crust.

Have a favorite recipe you'd like to contribute to the **Recipe of the Month** section of July/August's newsletter? E-mail it to Dawn before the last week of June!