

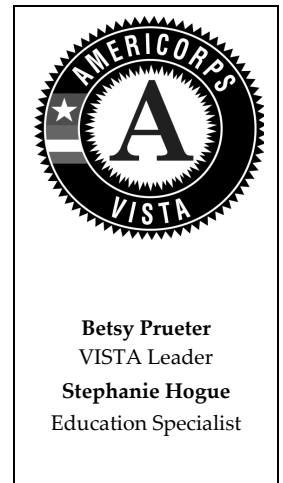


DPI VISTA Monthly

October 2007

"If I were to wish for anything, I should not wish for wealth and power but for the passionate sense of the potential, for the eye which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible..."

What wine is so sparkling, so fragrant, so intoxicating, as possibility!"



Soren Kierkagaard

Last week I received an email from Viola entitled "Life Lessons." It was a forward from an article written in the Cleveland Plain Dealer (my home town!) by Regina Brett. As I read through it I was struck by how many of these lessons were particularly relevant to our lives as VISTAs. I wanted to share them with the entire corps: I found them to be inspiring in their simplicity and their message. We should all take to heart some of these life lessons- and the sooner the better right?!

I selected 7 that I felt were the most significant for VISTA life. *Special thanks to Viola for inspiring this contribution!*

1. WHEN IN DOUBT, JUST TAKE THE NEXT SMALL STEP.

Our roles as VISTAs can certainly seem overwhelming. We may have a lot of questions about what we're doing, where our projects are heading or what our end results may be. But it's important to take things one step at a time (even if it's small one). We need to keep pushing so that our small steps will turn into big steps.

2. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WIN EVERY ARGUMENT. AGREE TO DISAGREE.

VISTAs work with a lot of different people with their own personalities and their own perspectives. Pick your battles and seek out collaboration: even with individuals with whom you disagree. Just because you don't agree doesn't mean you can't work together!

3. DON'T COMPARE YOUR LIFE TO OTHERS. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEIR JOURNEY IS ALL ABOUT.

I might rephrase this to say: "don't compare your VISTA experiences to other VISTAs." Share your experiences, yes. Learn from each other's experiences, absolutely.

But know that you are all in unique situations with unique roles. You are all making valuable contributions- but each in a different way!

4. DON'T AUDIT LIFE. SHOW UP AND MAKE THE MOST OF IT NOW.

My dad would always say, "Carpe Diem" Seize the Day. VISTA is about action. It's about engagement. It's about involvement. So take the initiative and make the most of this year. It will be of tremendous value to you in years to come.

5. NO MATTER HOW YOU FEEL, GET UP, DRESS UP, AND SHOW UP.

Some mornings it's extra hard to get out of bed. It seems like a perfect day to hit snooze....again. We're tired. We're frustrated. We've got a million other things to do. But we also made a commitment. To our sites, to our supervisors, to our communities, and really, to ourselves.

6. TAKE A DEEP BREATH. IT CALMS THE MIND.

If our frustrations look like they might get the best of us, step back. If we're being pulled in too many directions, take a moment to close your eyes and breathe. If an event we planned didn't go as planned. If an Action Team meeting seemed unproductive. Take a deep breath. We're all going to face our fair share of challenges and obstacles. But let's learn from these obstacles, regroup, recharge, and get right back to work!

7. IF YOU DON'T ASK, YOU DON'T GET.

As VISTAs, we should be pushing boundaries. Asking hard questions. And if there's something that doesn't make sense to us, we need to ask why. If we think we have a solution or a suggestion: we need to express it. Because if we don't, the moment will pass.

Betsy

Birthdays this month:

Be sure to send some birthday wishes!



Kelly Libert
gkhealthy@aol.com
(October 9)

Lauren Jakubowski
l.jakubowski@parentspluswi.org
(October 16)

Cat Horzewski
c.horzewski@parentspluswi.org
(October 21)

Carolyn Wood
wood_c@af.k12.wi.us
(October 29)

Dan Tourdot
dtourdot@cesa9.k12.wi.us
(October 31)

Money saving tip of the month: Read a book!



Now that John and I are both students, we have been trying to revert to our VISTA way of life. It has been surprisingly difficult to do so, and I have found that reading articles and books on voluntary simplicity have helped me this time around. One thing that has been particularly indispensable is World Community line of cookbooks – we have really saved a lot of money on groceries, and the

food is actually tasty! The first of these cookbooks, *More With Less*, was compiled by Doris Janzen Longacre, who wrote the simpler living classic *Living More With Less*. You may have already read this book, or it may not be your style, but it is a great place to start if you are looking for ways to stretch that VISTA paycheck. A couple of other book suggestions (note: I have not read these books so I can't vouch for any of them specifically):
Voluntary Simplicity by Duane Elgin
The Simple Living Guide by Janet Luhrs
Living Well on Practically Nothing by Ed Romney
The Complete Tightwad Gazette by Amy Dacyczyn
A Simple Choice by Deborah Taylor-Hough
Happy reading!

VISTA BLOG

You should have all received the email from me about the DPI VISTA blog. Well, it has been revived and it is my hope that we can use this as another way of staying in touch. Phone calls work. Emails are second nature to many of us. But a blog offers us another forum for communication. You can blog when you have the time. 6am. 11pm. It doesn't matter.

Also, some of us might feel more comfortable writing how we feel or what we've been going through rather than talking about it.

The blog is for sharing ideas and resources. It's for encouraging each other and celebrating our successes. It's for networking and having fun!

TO ACCESS THE BLOG: VISIT THIS WEBSITE:
<http://dpivista.blogspot.com/>

TO POST A NOTE ON THE BLOG OR COMMENT ON SOMEONE ELSE'S POST:

Click on the "Sign In" tab on the top right of the screen.

Enter your user name and password

N.B. If you don't have a google account, you will need to make one (it's free!)

After you sign in you will see a screen labeled "Dashboard."

You probably want to do one of two things:

1. Click on "**View Blog**" to read entries.
2. Click on "**New Post**" to add your own contribution.

With any questions- contact Betsy!

Next Step to Set Up Your Action Team: Just Do It!



Ruth Anne
Landsverk

The DPI Community Learning and Partnerships Team is fortunate to sponsor a “blockbuster” cadre of VISTA volunteers this year – yes, you!!

The common requirement for all DPI VISTAs is to start an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and to devise a One-Year Action Plan linked to school goals. As a gentle reminder, here are some of the ideas for “Next Steps” that VISTAs came up with in early September at the Fall Orientation in Madison. **Now** is a great time to act on one or two of them to fill your ATP seats, if you haven’t already done so!

Ideas for next steps from VISTAs:

- Meet with supervisor to discuss names of potential ATP members
- Prepare a brief handout that tells potential members what the Action Team is, what members do, and expected time commitments
- E-mail existing ATP members to ask for names of those willing to continue or begin serving
- Make phone calls to parents interested in serving on the Action Team
- E-mail or phone the PTA/PTO president to request someone from the school parent group to serve as liaison to the Action Team
- Personally invite teachers and other staff members to serve on the ATP OR e-mail staff inviting them to participate
- Meet with principal to talk about an Action Team schedule, meeting space, first agenda, refreshments (a nice touch, if possible), etc.
- Develop a short article for the school newsletter describing the ATP and inviting new members
- Create a brief parent survey and/or staff survey to gauge interest in ATP membership

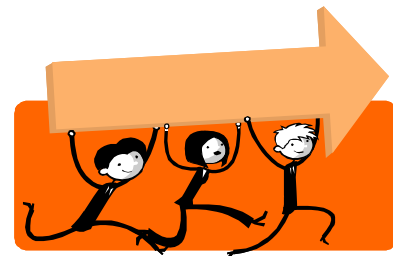
Remember, six to 12 members for an ATP is ideal, including:

- 2 to 3 parents and teachers (each) from different grades and/or school populations,
- the school principal (who may not be able to attend every meeting),
- 2 students, if possible, and
- a support staff member such as the school counselor, social worker, food service worker, or other member of the school staff.

It’s also a good idea to have a few parents who are willing to serve as alternate members to represent the “parent voice” when permanent members can’t attend meetings or events. Effective ATPs meet monthly, often vary when and where for members’ convenience, and know how to reach each other in between meetings via e-mail or phone.

Looking for ideas on how to conduct a good meeting or to get your Action Team off to a good start? Review DPI’s online Learning Together packet, *The Action Team*, at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/fcswintr.pdf>. Or, visit The Action Team for Partnerships pages on the website of the National Network of Partnership Schools at http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nnps_model/school/atp.htm. Reminder: by now, your school should have completed the paperwork and mailed in membership forms for joining the National Network. Membership forms are also available online.

Taking that first step or two in recruiting members for your ATP is often difficult, but must be done to lay the groundwork for future success. It’s common to hit a few bumps in the road in launching an Action Team, especially for VISTAs in schools new to this program. Start small, learn from each success and challenge, ask for help if you need it, and share your experiences, questions, and concerns with each other and with us at DPI. We’re all on this journey together! Bon voyage!



Interview with a VISTA

Julie answers Dana's questions:



Dana: Why did you decide to become a VISTA?

Julie: I have never volunteered, not really, anyway. I thought it was time to make a contribution to society, and saw that AmeriCorps was a great opportunity, plus the education award isn't too shabby either.

Dana: What is one thing you are looking forward to most during your VISTA year?

Julie: I am looking forward to seeing my ideas and programs put into action! It is one thing to see it on paper, and other to see it in real life.

Dana: What has surprised you already about being a VISTA?

Julie: Honestly, what has surprised me the most is that no one knows what AmeriCorps is! Everyone knows the Peace Corps, but it pretty much ends there. I now understand why we are constantly practicing our elevator speeches, we have to spread the word!

Dana: If you could go on a vacation anywhere, where would you go? Why?

Julie: I would love to travel to Madagascar, it is the fourth largest island in the world off the coast of southern Africa. It holds five percent of the world's plants and animals, 80% of which is unique and found only in Madagascar.

Dana: Where did you go to school? What did you major in and like studying the most?

Julie: I received my degree from UW-Stevens Point, where I studied Health Promotion and Wellness, as well as Massage Therapy and

Adventure Education. My favorite is adventure ed. I love camping, hiking, canoeing and just being immersed in nature.

Dana: Can you cook? What's your specialty?

Julie: I'm learning to cook through trail and error. I can however, bake. My favorite things to bake are rosemary focaccia bread and lemon poppy seed bread.

Dana: What is one thing you would tell people about AmeriCorps/VISTA that you think everyone should know?

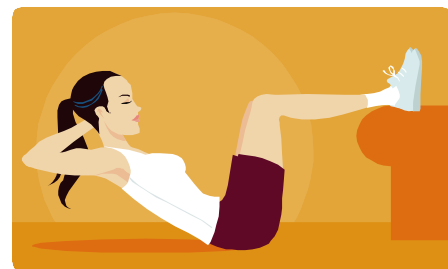
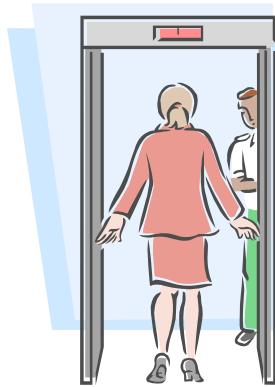
Julie: It is a gift of oneself. You are sharing your ideas, talents, time and heart. It is also something not to be taken lightly, serving with AmeriCorps is a major decision, that when made for the right reason, can be a very rewarding choice.

Dana: Are you from where you are currently serving? Either way, do you think that will help you?

Julie: I am from and currently live in Appleton, but serve in Green Bay. There is only about 30 miles between the two cities, but they have very different cultures, which I must admit surprised me. However, my co-VISTA Shannon, who is a native to the area, has been and continues to be a huge help.

Dana: What is your favorite thing to do when you're not eliminating poverty?

Julie: Working out, I love to be physically active. I feel exercise not only helps you physically, but mentally as well. I'm quite addicted actually, I'll get crabby if I go more than a few days without hitting the gym.



Dana: What are you hoping to learn from your VISTA year?

Julie: I'm hoping to gain perspective on where and how I can contribute to society from the working world. You get to see so many different career paths as a VISTA, and this year is giving me a chance to figure out what I want to do after service.

Dana answers Julie's questions:



Julie: Being more than half-way through your VISTA year, what advice do you have for a new VISTA like myself?

Dana: You are responsible for making your VISTA year everything it can be, so don't be afraid of taking risks! If there's something you want to do at your school, and it's related to the project, jump right in! If you're enthusiastic, other people will want to join up.

Julie: What has been your favorite project/program/ event so far at Parents Plus?

Dana: I have loved working with Pulaski High School and setting up an ATP there, because as much as you hear about the benefits of having an Action Team, it's really great to see it in action and get excited, invested people together in a room.

Julie: What is a random fact about yourself?

Dana: I skipped the second grade, so I've always been a year younger than my peers.

Julie: I'm always looking for new ways to save money, any tips or advice?

Dana: The library is the best place in the world. Seriously, you can take out anything you want for free! It's amazing to think about. But hitting up free events around you is always fun, and go where there is free food.

Julie: What is your personal mantra?

Dana: I've never really thought about it, but if I had to pick something, it would be the Golden Rule. As cliché as it seems, it really is true that if everyone treated the world how you would be treated, the world would be a better place.

Julie: Who is your role model/mentor, who inspires you?

Dana: My mother has always been the picture of a strong, amazing woman for me. It's a gift to have grown up with her.

Julie: I heard you love movies, what is the most recent movie you've seen that you would say is a must-see?

Dana: What a hard question! In the theaters, I recently saw "Shoot Em Up," which was amazing if you like seeing ridiculous fight scenes (a gunfight in midair after jumping out of an airplane!), and on DVD, I recently really liked "Ponette," a French film about a four year old girl who loses her mother and how small children deal with grief. Heartbreaking but really quite amazing.

Julie: What is your favorite genre of music and why? Who are some artists from that genre that you really enjoy?

Dana: I am one of those people that likes a ton of different kinds of music - indie rock, hip-hop, and electronic music are what most of my favorite bands come from. My three favorite bands/artists ever are They Might Be Giants, Sufjan Stevens, and The Mountain Goats.



Julie: What are your plans after your year of service is up?

Dana: I have no idea! Perhaps moving to New York City? We'll see.

Julie: How and where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Dana: I would love to be in NYC or LA, working in writing or film somehow. But ending up in the nonprofit world, hopefully working with women's issues, wouldn't be bad, either. I have too many things I would love to do!

* * * * *



Next Month:

Virginia Walker and Dan Tourdot

Life After VISTA



Stephanie Hogue

First of all I just wanted to say that I was happy to meet you all at orientation last month, and I hope that everyone is starting to feel a little more comfortable in their sites.

As many of you may already know, I have been living this “life after VISTA” for a year now. I still feel that VISTA is a part of who I am, and I probably will for the rest of my life. I don’t presume that you will all feel the same way about your year or two or three of service, but I do really encourage you all to maintain a certain level of self-reflection during your year because I do believe that each of you will change as people throughout your terms. I was really excited about the self-addressed letters you all wrote at orientation (and I wish I had done the same during my service, since I had participated in a similar activity before). Jane also mentioned journaling as a way to see your progress and growth, and I am a big proponent of keeping a record of your feelings as well as your activities throughout the year. As a counseling student with several (required) self-reflection journals going at the same time, however, I know it can feel a little burdensome to keep it up. Not everyone is a journaling type of person, either, and if you feel that way you may be looking for another way to keep that record. You could (video or audio) tape yourself whenever the mood strikes. If pictures are worth a thousand words to you, you could keep a scrapbook or photo-journal full of images that will evoke your sentiments. You could keep a folder of emails you send to others that express what you are going through, or post your thoughts on the DPI VISTA blog (or keep your own personal blog). You may even want to keep a personal copy of documents you’ve created or bi-weekly reports with extra notes on how you felt about each of them. (If you have other ways in which you have kept a personal growth record, please share them with your fellow VISTAs!) Hopefully, you can find a way to make it work for you without it being too frustrating, and it really will be a wonderful record to keep for years to come!

Recipe of the Month:

Squash Cookies

Submitted by Betsy Prueter



Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups mashed, cooked butternut squash
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
- 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and sugars until fluffy. Beat in the eggs and squash. Sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and spices; add to mixture, stirring until well blended. Spoon onto cookie sheets spacing cookies 2 inches apart. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes in the preheated oven, until edges are golden.

Have a favorite recipe you’d like to contribute to the **Recipe of the Month** section of November’s newsletter? E-mail it to Betsy before the last week of October!