

# THE PSP JOTTER

The Public School Partnership's Monthly Newsletter

DECEMBER 2015

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

### A Busy Time of Year

As the holidays and New Year draw closer, schools and service organizations face greater need than ever, and the sites we serve are no exception. We are grateful for the ongoing efforts of our VISTA members and site supervisors to address the needs of Cache Valley and the surrounding area. We hope you have a wonderful holiday break and return refreshed for a new year of service! We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome 3 new VISTA Members to our organization who joined PSP in November; Martha Silos and Amy Lambert who serve at our new partner site Fremont High School in Plain City, and Corrie Bicakcioglu who joined the Title VII program.

## SITE HIGHLIGHTS

### Look at What Our VISTAs Have Been Up To Title VII of Northern Utah

Title VII is a national program that ensures the academic success of Native American students in the public school system. We currently have 4 VISTA members working at the local Title VII office, which services Cache and Box Elder counties. Their primary goals are serve as mentors, promote college and career readiness, increase communication between parents and school staff, and to spread cultural awareness.

November marked the celebration of National Native Heritage Month, and our Title VII VISTA Members made sure to spread awareness wherever possible. Angelina Whitehorse prepared a surprise presentation of Native Powwow singers and dancers at Mountain Crest High School to increase awareness of cultural sensitivity. After the event, many students commented how much they enjoyed the presentation and how it helped them to better understand their Native classmates. Corrie Bicakcioglu was please to reintroduce the Title VII program at Heritage Elementary.

She also helped Native elementary students connect with their culture by drawing pictures representing their tribes; these pictures will be compiled into a booklet that will be given to Native Students to share with their families. Cameron Brewer facilitated career and college exploration with high school students through events like Native Aggie Day on Utah State University's campus and by assisting seniors with university and FAFSA applications. For Native Heritage month Cameron worked with Native students to create posters explaining aspects of indigenous culture to their non-Native peers. Jennie Hymas worked with students in the elementary and middle schools she serves to create projects celebrating the students' tribes. These projects were well received by school staff and parents alike and many offered additional support. Reviewing all these accomplishments, it looks like National Native Heritage month was a success in our schools. Thanks for making this possible Title VII team!

## Family Information & Resource Center

The Family Information & Resource Center is a local organization whose goal is to strengthen families and promote their success. They accomplish this by hosting parenting classes, providing home visits, maintaining a children's resource library, and connecting families to needed services.

Laura Higgins has recently helped to implement a new data system at her site, which keeps track of the large number of volunteers she receives on a daily basis. With this new data she will be better able to manage her volunteers and optimize their time. She has also improved the Center's classes with new lesson plans and increased volunteer training. Since the changes have been made, parents of children who attend the Center's classes have remarked that their children are learning many more skills that they can apply in the home. Way to go Laura!

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### Wilson Elementary School

Michelle Dove and Lynda Jensen, both recent VISTA alumni, collected gently used clothes throughout the school year for the annual Wilson Closet Clothing Drive, which serves students and local community members. Students, teachers, parents, and other community members donated over \$2,600 worth of clothes, shoes, backpacks, and outerwear for the event. In addition to these donations, Michelle and Lynda recruited 93 volunteers for this event, who put in a total of 564 hours of volunteer work. Thanks to the Wilson Closet, clothing was provided to 268 people. Awesome job Wilson crew!

### Willow Valley Middle School

VISTA Member Angela Wood has been working hard with Governor's Youth Council students to promote healthy, drug free living. For Red Ribbon Week she planned daily activities to help students across the school learn about the harmful effects of drugs and how they can "just say no!" She has also provided guidance to students in need, giving them the strategies to deal with bullying and other difficult situations. Way to go Angela!

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- **December 8:** Jasmine's Birthday
- **December 14:** Megan's Birthday
- **December 16:** Melissa's Birthday
- **December 21 - 23:** Please work onsite if your site is open these days; otherwise you'll need to accumulate 24 work hours between Dec. 21 and Jan. 3.
- **December 24 - January 1:** Official PSP Holiday Break
- **December 27:** Martha's Birthday
- **January 7 & 8:** Site Visits
- **January 13:** Monthly Training
- **January 18:** MLK Day Service Project & Rikki's Birthday
- **January 23:** Amanda's Birthday

### VISTA MEMBER RECOGNITION

Thanking our VISTAS for their hard work



**Shonna Ferree,  
AmeriCorps VISTA  
Leader**

#### *The Good Role Model Award*

Shonna is an excellent leader and role model for all of the VISTA members on the PSP team. Throughout her service as a VISTA Member and Leader Shonna has taken the call to serve her community and her team as a personal responsibility. She is consistently dedicated to her projects and our team. As a VISTA Leader she gives every aspect of her job 110% of her effort. She shows up early, actively participates, gets other VISTAs involved, and always finishes what she starts with outstanding results. We appreciate everything she does for our team!



**Beverly Pickup,  
South Cache Middle  
School**

#### *The Outstanding Outcomes Award*

Beverly has been at South Cache for only 4 months and has already made big things happen for her site. She coordinated a Utah Scholars presentation program for all 8th graders at the school by reaching out to fellow VISTAs, education professionals, and other community professionals to serve as speakers. As a result, 9 volunteers presented to 700 eighth graders, preparing those students for college and making them more aware of the steps they need to take to reach their career aspirations. She also recently started a Latino College & Career Readiness club that has 46 student members who work to increase enthusiasm and awareness of college and professional opportunities among Latino students. Beverly has recently accepted a position at Mountain Crest High School as the new Career Center Coordinator starting in the New Year. We are proud of Beverly and grateful for her 2+ years of AmeriCorps VISTA service!



**Megan Williams,  
Sound Beginnings  
Preschool**

*The Perseverance  
Award*

We truly appreciate Megan's perseverance; it is something that we can all learn from, both personally

and professionally. Megan has had to overcome several obstacles the past few months at Sound Beginnings, but she has faced them with unwavering optimism. When Megan encounters hurdles, she does not let them interfere with her work or let them affect her confidence in herself or our team. She always comes away from these struggles more resilient than before and having learned from her experiences.



**Lynda Jensen,  
Wilson Elementary  
School**

*The Above & Beyond  
Award*

Lynda has gone the extra mile for PSP since she started as a VISTA 3 years

ago at Wilson Elementary. She is always willing to come in early, stay late, contribute to projects, and reach out to any VISTA who needs support. Lynda has donated a lot of her time and personal craft supplies to making our projects successful, especially this month's Christmas tree service project. Lynda's unconditional dedication and loyalty to our team is contagious, and she makes the PSP a better organization to work for because of her supportive and enthusiastic attitude. She will be greatly missed when she wraps up her VISTA term this month. Thanks for all you've done for us over the past few years Lynda!

## December Service Projects

### A Time to Give

At quarterly training earlier this month, PSP hosted 2 service projects as a way to give back to the community during the holidays. For the first project, in collaboration with volunteer Kaisa Patterson, VISTA

Members stuffed stockings with toys, art supplies, candy, gloves, and hats purchased with a generous grant donation from the Shopko Foundation. In all, 50 stockings were filled to the brim with goodies for children of all ages. These stockings were then donated to the Cache Valley Food Bank for distribution to families in need.

For our second service project, local K-Mart and Wal-Mart stores collectively donated 4 Christmas trees for families in need selected from some of our sites. VISTA Members crafted themed ornaments that were given to families along with the trees so each family could participate in the tradition of decorating their own Christmas tree. VISTA Mentors then delivered the tree to each family. Thank -you to our VISTA Members for helping us make these service projects a success and for donating the craft supplies needed to make it happen. With your help, we were able to brighten Christmas for a few families in our community!

## Good-Bye to Wilson Elementary

### Wrapping Up 5 & ½ Years of VISTA Service

Wilson Elementary School has been a site with the Public School Partnership for the last 5 & ½ years. December marks the end of term for Lynda Jensen, the last VISTA Member to be assigned to this project. We are grateful for the opportunities provided to our VISTAs working there and are proud of all that they have accomplished for Wilson. Some of the programs our VISTAs have contributed to there include:

- Wilson Closet Clothing Drive
- After School Club
- Volunteer coordination & recognition
- At-risk student interventions
- Youth Service Club
- Food Backpack Program
- Holiday toy drives
- STEAM initiatives
- Website & social media outreach
- Grant writing & resource generation
- School Community Council
- PLC & PTA support
- Parent engagement
- Arranging guest speakers & presenters