



# THE PSP JOTTER



## The Public & School Partnership's Monthly Newsletter December 2017

### PSP 2017 BEST PRACTICES COMPETITION WINNER

During the summer, Service Year Alliance ran a competition to find non-profit best practices in the service field.



Among this year's winners is—drum roll please—the Utah State University Public & School Partnership. PSP won in multiple categories and will be awarded \$4,000. Other winners included organizations from all over the country, from Utah to New York to Washington.

Service Year Alliance's goal for this competition is to turn the practices of organizations like PSP into templates for other organizations to use and learn from. Their ultimate goal is to make a year of paid, full-time service—a service year—a common expectation and opportunity for all young Americans.

### 2017 SUB FOR SANTA HOLIDAY SERVICE

On December 12 and 13, twenty-one VISTA members helped with the local Sub for Santa project. Members worked hard for two full days.

They checked family bags of gifts, making sure that each bag had the correct gift for each family member. VISTA members reported that they “got a ton done.”

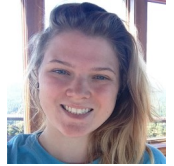
The project will serve over 200 local families, which includes over 600 youth.

### VISTA MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

#### Stokes Nature Center

The Stokes Nature Center is now “hibernating” for the winter and will re-open March 21, 2018.

VISTA member Emma Tucek has been making a difference since she started helping at the center in March.



Emma has helped coordinate programs for families and children in the community through partnering organizations. “The first program for each group has been a naturalist hike and Nature Center tour. Families and children, who have never been up to our Nature Center, get a sensory experience and focus on the sights, sounds, smells and feels of the nature around us and get to meet our critters like Gonzo, the Great Basin Gopher Snake, and Diego, the Collared Lizard. We have help programs with The Family Place, Migrant Head Start, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Northern Utah Native Connection. Stokes will host snowshoeing this winter.”

Emma also said that, “Future VISTA programs may include expanding our community partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships. Additionally, we will prioritize a focus on aiding schools with the costs associated with field trips.”

#### Green Canyon High School

Jason Jensen set up a HOPE Squad at Green Canyon High School.

The HOPE Squad started in Provo, Utah in response to the incredibly high rate of teens experiencing mental illness and suicide in our state.



HOPE Squads are comprised of students who are trained to watch for at-risk students utilizing the QPR (question, persuade, refer) technique, provide friendship, identify warning signs, and seek help from adults. Utah is in the top 15 states for suicide rate. Evidence-based research reveals that adolescents experiencing depressive or suicidal thoughts will often confide in a friend rather than an adult.

Rarely will the friend seek assistance from an adult. The Hope Squad Program trains adolescents to always seek assistance from an adult when they or a peer are struggling with suicide concerns.

As a new HOPE Squad Jason and others at Green Canyon High School are working to reduce the rates of suicide through training groups of youth on how to listen to other students, how to identify signs of suicide, how to refer peers to greater help, and how to help themselves stay healthy.

Jason has accepted a school counselor position in St. George, and is leaving the VISTA program with Public & School Partnership. We wish him well. We will all miss him.

## VISTA MEMBER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Consider nominating a VISTA member for his/her work.

- The *Above & Beyond Award* for the VISTA who puts in extra effort for PSP, their site, or a struggling student.
- The *Good Role Model Award* for the VISTA who exemplifies what it means to be a National Service volunteer.
- The *Outstanding Outcomes Award* for the VISTA who makes big impacts on their site and their community.
- The *Determination Award* for the VISTA who rises to face challenges and overcomes them unyielding tenacity.

### Good Role Model Award

#### **Janessa Zucchetto, Bridger Elementary**

Janessa is an extremely driven VISTA Member. She has already coordinated several school-wide events for Bridger Elementary - events where 200-300 people are in attendance - and willingly offers her expertise on PSP-coordinated events. During all of her endeavors, she consistently represents PSP, VISTA, and Bridger with professionalism, despite

any overwhelming or unforeseen circumstances. She is also extremely respectful of the VISTA, PSP, and site expectations in which our VISTA Members are asked to meet, and she frequently goes above and beyond what is asked of her. Janessa is not afraid to ask questions to get clarification and maintains open and direct communication with her site and PSP supervisors, which is greatly appreciated. Janessa is truly a model VISTA member, one that demonstrates adaptability, resiliency, determination, and professionalism.

### Outstanding Outcome Award

#### **Monique Marsh, Bates Elementary**

Monique recently coordinated a school-wide food and clothing drive at Bates Elementary.



Monique engaged student volunteers, staff, and parents in the drive, and in the end, the school brought in over 8,000 items - over \$10,000 in in-kind donations! This amount led Bates Elementary to be awarded 4th place as part of the drive competition, which earned the school an additional \$1500!

Monique also coordinated a school-wide kindness training and recess-inclusion program that engaged all of the students at the school. Monique has only been serving at Bates Elementary since late August, but she has already made a huge impact at the school!

## TWO AMERICORPS VISTA MEMBERS RECEIVE THE HARKIN AWARD

Two AmeriCorps VISTA members, including one from Arizona, were recently honored as 2017 Tom Harkin Award Winners. Created in 2014, the Tom Harkin Excellence in AmeriCorps Awards pays tribute to Senator Tom Harkin's lifelong support for national service, while recognizing the outstanding and innovative AmeriCorps programs.