



THE PSP JOTTER



The Public & School Partnership's Monthly Newsletter
November 2016

A FEW HEARTFELT FAREWELLS



Krista Gurko

This month, PSP staff member Krista Gurko finished up her work at PSP in order to pursue her educational goals. Krista joined PSP as the VISTA Program Coordinator in July, 2014 and in April, 2016, took on a second role as PSP's first RSVP

Program Director. During Krista's time with PSP, her responsibilities included everything from managing payroll, to doing site visits, to visiting potential RSVP partner stations in Cache and Rich counties. Krista continuously worked to improve PSP's recruitment and hiring processes and its sustainability practices. She also worked very hard to increase visibility and awareness of PSP, National Service programs, and the valuable services they provide to the community.

Krista is currently pursuing a PhD in Human Development & Family Studies through the Family, Consumer, and Human Development Department at USU, but she continues to provide guidance and support to PSP's office team and National Service volunteers whenever possible. Krista has made a lasting impact on PSP, and she will be greatly missed!



Graciela Botello

Gracie Botello recently completed her VISTA service with PSP and USU's Education Outreach program. Gracie joined PSP in November of 2014, and she has made a tremendous impact on the lives of so many people here in Cache Valley.

In her time at PSP, Gracie tracked data and developed training materials for volunteers serving in local schools. She also developed materials to educate middle school girls on important life skills such as setting goals and being confident. One of her proudest achievements was the creation of My Young Mother, a scholarship program in partnership

with Bridgerland Applied Technical College that supports high school-aged mothers in Cache Valley in their post-secondary endeavors. Her final event held on November 13 was "Changing Faith, Raising Hope" (read more below). Gracie was a finalist for the Youthlinc Young Humanitarian Award, and she received the highest level of the President's Volunteer Service Award for serving over 4,000 volunteer hours.

Gracie will continue to support USU's Education Outreach program, and she will also be employed at Rocky Mountain Home Care & Hospice. Gracie's goal is to pursue medical school, which she will begin applying to in Spring, 2017. We are so grateful for the compassion that Gracie has brought to our team, and we wish her the best of luck!

IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

Box Elder Middle School Takes Students to "Reality Town"

On November 1st and 3rd, 9th grade students at Box Elder Middle School participated in an interactive financial education activity called "Reality Town," where they learned the importance of how educational attainment may impact future employment opportunities. The event was coordinated by BEMS school counselors and PSP VISTA Shayley Warner. Students were given a workbook that included their assigned career, monthly salary, family situation, and a checklist for each of the stations the students were required to visit to pay their monthly bills. A few of the stations were housing, child care and entertainment. If students were low on funds, they visited the Financial Wellness station to obtain financial support through other means.

Over 530 students participated in the activity, and Shayley and her team recruited 48 volunteers who served a total of 347 hours. Volunteers included PSP VISTA members, local

professionals, and family and friends. Shayley and the counseling team at BEMS obtained \$237 in donations from Dominos, Taco Time, Smith's and Maddox Ranch House in Brigham City to provide lunch for all of the volunteers.

Students learned importance of budgeting and the difficulties of overspending, and one student even developed a new-found appreciation for his parents and said, "now I know how my mom feels!" Thanks to Shayley, school counselors, and staff for giving the volunteers and students at BEMS this opportunity!

Red Ribbon Week at Cache High School

Every November during Red Ribbon Week, schools across the country plan activities and host assemblies to educate their students about the dangers of drugs. At Cache High, PSP VISTA Member Wes Andrew and school staff coordinated interactive, themed activities so that students could learn the importance of avoiding drugs and developing healthy habits.

Throughout the week, students participated in themed activities such as "Shade out Drugs" by wearing sunglasses all day and "Sock it to Drugs" by wearing crazy socks to school. The students watched educational videos on the harms of abusing drugs such as alcohol and prescription medicine, and they also received wristbands, pencils, and dog tags representing their decision to remain drug free. On Friday, "Grim Reaper Day," a student volunteer dressed up as The Grim Reaper and visited each classroom with a real-life story about someone who had died as a result of drug use. An "X" was then put on some of the students to represent the number of drug-related deaths throughout the year in Utah.

Overall, the activities were extremely informative, and a staff member even commended Wes for putting together, "the best red ribbon week he has seen in his 25 years of teaching." Great job Wes and staff and students at Cache High!

Changing Faith, Raising Hope

Work on the Changing Faith, Raising Hope event began for PSP VISTA Gracie Botello and her

team almost one year ago. The event, aimed at educating attendees on the diverse experiences of fellow community members and the importance of coming together and helping each other, took place on November 13 at Why Sound Venue in Logan, UT in front of a full house of community members.

During the event, the topics of veterans, refugees, education, child abuse, immigration, homelessness, and mental health and suicide were discussed through a combination of songs, slide shows, speeches, and pre-recorded interviews of people who had lived through experiences related to these topics during their life. A band, primarily made up of students from Fast Forward High School, played during the event, and several organizations, including My Young Mother, LOVE, the USU Veteran's Association, and the Cache Refugee & Immigrant Connection (CRIC), set up booths to raise awareness for their services.

The event was a huge success, and a second event will take place on March 30, 2017. Thank you to Gracie and her team for providing people with the opportunity to learn and grow!

VISTA MEMBER RECOGNITION

Thanking our VISTA Members for Their Hard Work

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



**Aubree Thomas,
Northern Utah Native
Connection**

The Above & Beyond Award

Aubree dedicates countless hours and a tremendous amount of energy to making sure that the Northern

Utah Native Connection program is running smoothly and that she is providing the support the team, students, and school staff need to make the program successful for everyone involved. Aubree frequently seeks additional professional and personal development opportunities to improve her own skills and abilities as well as the services that the Northern Utah Native Connection program provides. She is always willing to take the time to offer other team members guidance and support when needed, and they deeply appreciate her commitment to making sure that they have a rewarding service experience.

Aubree is an asset to PSP and the Northern Utah Native Connection team, and we are very grateful for her willingness to always go above and beyond!



**Shonna Ferree,
PSP Office**

The Good Role Model Award

Shonna is in her third year of VISTA service, and has served as PSP's VISTA Leader for almost

two years. During her service, Shonna has been a model of VISTA and community service, and her passion to better the lives of those around her is evident in all aspects of her service. Shonna is a reliable and responsive team member, and she is quick to respond when members have questions or need help. She is genuinely supportive of staff and other members, and she often goes out of her way to attend extra activities hosted by VISTA Members. She is proud of her VISTA service and advocates for National Service whenever possible.

Shonna is a great example of what it means to serve as a National Service volunteer, and we are very lucky to have Shonna as a team member with PSP!

RSVP RECEIVES ACCOLADES FROM COMMUNITY

PSP's Senior Corps RSVP program has received very positive feedback from the community recently. A few weeks ago, Rodney Pack received a call from a current RSVP volunteer who just began serving with RSVP at

Cedar Ridge Middle School in October. The volunteer mentioned that she was truly enjoying working with the students and that she "feels like a sixth grader again!" Station supervisors have also mentioned that without the RSVP volunteers, their organizations and programs would cease to exist because there simply are not enough funds available to non-profit organizations for them to accomplish their mission through paid staff members alone.

PSP's RSVP program is up to almost 60 volunteers serving in 15 schools and community organizations in Cache and Rich counties. All volunteers are over the age of 55. If you or someone you know is interested in serving with PSP's RSVP program, make sure to contact Rodney Pack at 435-797-5720 or rsvpcacherich@gmail.com.

HERE IS WHAT WE HAVE COMING UP...



UPCOMING EVENTS

- November 30: Quarterly Training
- December 8-9: Site Visits
- December 13-14: Holiday Service Project
- December 14: Megan W.'s Birthday
- December 16: Melissa Y.'s Birthday!
- December 16: PSP Holiday Social

**CONTINUE ON TO
SEE IMPORTANT
UPDATES FROM OUR
RSVP PROGRAM!**



RSVP Newsletter



Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. Sponsored by the Public & School Partnership at Utah State University. RSVP provides volunteering opportunities to seniors 55 and older in Cache County and Rich County.

November 2016

Current and planned organizations where Cache and Rich RSVP volunteers help:

In Hyrum:

Mountain Crest High School

In Logan:

Adams Elementary

Bear River Head Start

Bridgerland Literacy

Cache Food Pantry

Cache High School

Cache Refugee &
Immigrant Connection

Cache Senior Center

Logan Family Center

Stokes Nature Center

Wilson Elementary

Utah Conservation Corps

In Smithfield:

Birch Creek Elementary

Park Elementary

Summit Elementary

In Rich County:

Bear River Head Start

Goodbye, Krista. Thanks!

We are sorry to acknowledge that Krista Gurko left the Public & School Partnership and RSVP on November 16, 2016.

Krista has been with the Public and School Partnership (PSP) for two-and-a-half years, and has also served as RSVP director for the last eight months.

Krista received a Master's in education from the University of Washington before coming to Utah State University seven years ago.

Krista has resigned her PSP/RSVP responsibilities to more intensely focus on getting her doctorate in human development from USU. Luckily, we should still be able to see Krista from time to time.

We are thankful for not only Krista's years of service, but her wise counsel, insight, humanity and dedication to helping make a difference in our community.

We look forward to calling her Dr. Gurko.

Best of luck, Krista!

Volunteering and Civic Life in America

In its annual report, a federal study shows that 1 in 4 Americans volunteered through an organization and two-thirds of all Americans helped a neighbor in the last year. Over the last 14 years, Americans have given service worth—drum roll please—an estimated \$2.3 trillion dollars.

Americans who volunteer are almost twice as likely to donate to charity as non-volunteers. Nearly 80% of volunteers give to charity, while only 40% of the rest of the populations do.

62.5% of us do informal volunteering.

Among us seniors, we have the highest median hours we give each year in volunteer hours. Our most likely volunteering role is tutoring, teaching and mentoring youth.

Volunteers in Cache and Rich Counties, like those across the nation, provide critical support to schools and to non-profit organizations. Many organizations would cease to exist without volunteers.

Again, Utah was #1 in volunteering.

Aren't volunteers great people!



Ways to Get Involved Through RSVP

Meals to Youth at Schools

Not surprisingly, having adequate nutrition is critical for school children to be most successful in the classroom and at school.

According to Health People, 1 in 5 Utah children do not know where their next meal will come from.



Reacting to these issues, a number of local schools have opened food pantries where students who have some level of food insecurity can go to get a meal or snack during the day. Much of the food going to the school pantries comes from the Cache Food Pantry, but local grocery stores have also helped with donations.

The problem for schools is getting donated food from the source to the school. A number of RSVP members have stepped up and are taking food to an assigned school once a week. Currently, through volunteers, we get food each week from the Food Pantry to Mountain Crest and to Cache High.

Other schools have taken notice of the success of these programs and want to help students through their own food pantry program. If you would be interested in taking food from the Food Pantry to a local school once a week—plan on about 90 minutes—please let us know.

Picking up and delivering food does not require a lot of lifting. The Food Pantry usually has personnel to get food to a volunteer's car, and the schools usually have students who can get food from the car to the school.

If you would be interested in helping with food pantry delivery at a local school, give us a call.

More Opportunities to Serve

Logan Family Center

This Family Center (LFC) is located between the Island Market and Wilson Elementary on Logan's Island. LFC is looking for volunteers who will help teach preschool classes, maintain lending library materials, and help staff develop teaching materials year round.

They need seniors who can be with young children and parents to act as role models and offering positive response to families' accomplishments and lend a sympathetic ear when appropriate.

Cache High School

This high school on 1400 North in Logan needs volunteers to help in classrooms, mentoring and tutoring students. They also need volunteers with background/skill in

art.

Students at this school want to learn! Their 104 students have an average daily attendance of 91%!

Stokes Nature Center

The Stokes Nature Center needs volunteers to carry out their mission of providing nature education to people of all ages.

Stokes has a strong need for volunteers with a range of experience. Needs include retired educators with natural science backgrounds who can talk to groups about understanding and appreciating nature, helping with outreach events, and handicrafts.

They need "critter caretakers." These volunteers can come in any time the center is open and care for native critters. Critters include

a snake, a salamander and hummingbirds.

They also need volunteers who can serve as docents at the center welcoming visitors.

You can find out more about volunteering opportunities at their web site: www.logannature.org/volunteer.

Teaching Sports at School

Schools no longer have time in their schedules to teach the rules about key sports, nor help with learning how to do well in sports.

Many schools have asked for senior volunteers who would volunteer on some afternoons teaching baseball, basketball, football and soccer to students.