



Tennessee AmeriCorps Programs Serve Students

The majority of Tennessee's AmeriCorps programs focus on children and youth through mentoring, tutoring, and in-class teaching. During the 2019-20 program year, over 750 AmeriCorps members will serve to improve academic performance for 30,082 students in low-performing schools, to tutor and mentor 3,200 students, and to improve school readiness for 360 Head Start children.

In honor of the back-to-school season, Volunteer Tennessee is highlighting just a few of the AmeriCorps members that are serving students in schools or providing after-school support. We asked them to share their inspiration for serving with students, what they are excited about for the school year, or for an impactful moment they have already experienced.



AmeriCorps Member: Rolander Mann, Resident Teacher at Green Dot Teacher Residency through [Alder Graduate School of Education](#)

“My impactful moment occurred the first week of school. I was tasked by my mentor teacher to teach a lesson on figurative language. I had a lot of anxiety and nervousness. However, once class started, both the anxiety and nervousness abandoned my body. The energy level in the class was amazing and my student engagement was off the charts! My assistant principal stopped by unexpectedly to gauge the instruction and learning environment. I received so much positive feedback from both, my assistant principal and my mentor teacher. What put the icing on the

cake—the campus security officer stopped me later that day and said, “Your class sounded so fun! I wanted to come in and participate myself!” I can’t describe with words the joy and relief that I experienced. At that moment, I felt like I belonged. I felt like, “I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!” All those emotions...”

AmeriCorps Member: Devante Woodson, [City Year Memphis](#)

“What inspired me to serve in the classroom is the overwhelming feeling of helplessness I sometimes feel when looking at our world. I was looking for an opportunity where I could give back and tangibly see the impact of my service. I know that the most selfless thing I can do is pour into others the way that I have been poured into. Serving in the classroom is a great place to start!”



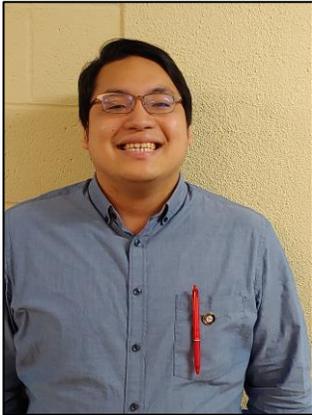
AmeriCorps Member: Allison (Ally) Hollenkamp, T.E.A.M-[Emerald Youth Foundation](#)

“I was inspired to serve with students because my biggest passion is working to close the opportunity gap between children of differing parental incomes. Every child deserves quality education and access to resources, regardless of their family’s economic circumstances. I have been blessed with the chance to serve in joyful, diverse afterschool programs at Emerald Youth Foundation. “



AmeriCorps Member: Chandler Davenport, teacher at Brainerd High School through the [Project Inspire Teacher Residency](#)

“I’m excited to work with my clinical instructor to create a curriculum that’s representative of the students in our classroom. It’s really important for me to be able to say “you belong here” through the things I’m teaching. I’m also looking forward to developing the leadership styles of my students. Most people have a traditional view of leadership but I want to teach my students that they can each be a leader with the skills they already have.”



AmeriCorps Member: Raymond Yu, teacher at Liberty Collegiate Academy through [Relay Graduate School of Education](#)

“When I reflect about the journey that led me to become the person I am today, I recognize the multitude of teachers that did countless things for me – mentored me, advocated for me, but above all brought out the best for me. Having a support network like the one I had when I went through the educational system is unfortunately not a universal experience in the United States. I serve in the classroom as a way to pay it forward, making sure that students know that they have someone on their side to help them reach their full potential.

At the beginning of my first math lesson of the year, I had students try to figure out integer addition rules with a number line and minimal guidance from me. Two students in the back of the room became frustrated. As we discussed patterns, models, and strategies together as a class, these two students had multiple ‘a-ha!’ moments. At the end of the period, these students did not want to put their pencils down. When students are given ownership of their learning, they fall in love with the content and become life-long independent learners.”

AmeriCorps Member: Sarah Bissell, 2nd Grade Teacher in Shelby County Schools through [Teach For America-Memphis](#)

“I joined Teach For America because I wanted to find a way to pair my passion for people and social justice with my passion for teaching. I’ve known my desire to teach for a long time and discovered that with TFA I could be a part of something making a big impact through teaching.”





AmeriCorps Member: Sarah Sepanski, [Teach for America-Nashville-Chattanooga](#)

“A moment from the first weeks of school that has been truly impactful for me is when a student wrote in a class reflection that she felt the class was “very welcoming” and she felt comfortable getting answers wrong in math class now. As an 8th grade math teacher, I strive to create a class environment where kindness, positivity and challenge are at the forefront, and math mistakes are appreciated because they help us grow. Knowing a student feels these norms in my classroom will help inspire me this school year.”

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AmeriCorps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps and Senior Corps programs and leads the nation's volunteering and service efforts. For more information, visit [NationalService.gov](#).
