



AmeriCorps Programs Provide Service for All

National Service strives to engage all people as community assets and resources by providing meaningful opportunities for individuals with disabilities to contribute to their communities and learn valuable skills. National Service also makes a difference in the lives of people with disabilities through the AmeriCorps members serving in communities across the United States.

The **AmeriCorps Building Futures** program at the [AIM Center](#) provides consumer-driven psychiatric rehabilitation services for individuals with mental illness in the Chattanooga area. AmeriCorps members have a lasting impact on the AIM Center members by helping them to improve their physical, mental, and emotional health.

Meet Regina Geronimo, AIM Center AmeriCorps member:

My name is Regina Geronimo, and I serve at a Clubhouse! The place where I serve, AIM Center, is a not-for-profit, mental health program offering employment, education, housing, socialization, and wellness opportunities for adults living with serious mental illness. Our focus is on recovery! Using a Clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation, AIM Center allows participants, called members, to develop relationships and create an individual recovery plan. It is a special place, because AIM Center staff, AmeriCorps members and AIM Center members work side-by-side accomplishing the tasks and activities needed to run the Clubhouse. Each day, over eighty-five members come to AIM Center to participate in recovery activities. By the relationships we forge and the meaningful work we do, members can achieve their goal to lead fulfilling and productive lives while living with their mental illness. We like to say at the Clubhouse that Relationships + Work = Recovery!



Photo of Regina Geronimo courtesy of AIM Center

I began as the AmeriCorps Fitness Specialist in December 2016 by a happy accident. I initially applied for the Part-Time Receptionist position, but in the interview process, I asked about an AmeriCorps posting I had seen online and applied for it instead. I truly believe I could not have found a better role than serving as an AmeriCorps member at AIM Center. It is a rare position that helps a part of our community that often goes overlooked in our society.

AIM Center members are encouraged to have goals to help them in their recovery. Many members have a goal to improve their physical health, and this is where my role fits into the program. My position as Fitness Specialist is one that gives unique opportunities and services that mental health consumers do not



usually see. I love working with members to provide physical fitness consultations as well as instruction on yoga and meditative techniques, and very often in a one-on-one setting, so members experience no



Photo of Regina Geronimo courtesy of AIM Center

barriers to achieving their physical fitness goals. My supervisor encourages me to introduce new wellness activities in the fitness program, and I arranged for a Tai Chi instructor to give lessons to members once a week.

I intend to apply for a second term of AmeriCorps at AIM Center, because I feel I have only scratched the surface with the members' potential to achieve better wellness and health outcomes. I see many opportunities opening up for me after my AmeriCorps experience because of the enriching professional experience with the staff and members. I have not decided whether I will go back to school for a post-graduate degree, or I have aspirations of joining the Peace Corps. I do know that

Clubhouse members accomplishing their recovery goals have inspired me, and I trust that if I have a plan in place, whatever the future brings, I will be ready to take it on!

[Volunteer Tennessee](#) and the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) are proud to support national service programs that make a difference for Tennesseans living with disabilities. Join the conversation about inclusion in national service on social media by using #Service4All.

Thank you for your service, Regina!

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[Volunteer Tennessee](#) is a 25 member bipartisan board appointed by the Governor to encourage volunteerism and community service. Volunteer Tennessee pursues its mission through administration of AmeriCorps grants, training and collaborations and coalitions with public and private organizations interested in volunteerism and service. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

AmeriCorps is a program of the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) (CNCS), a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. As part of their continued efforts to engage the public with national service, CNCS has released their [2017 Public Engagement, Outreach, and Education Plan](#). As part of this plan, the agency has designated monthly themes throughout the year, centered on CNCS focus areas. July's theme focuses on Inclusion.