



## Veterans, Military Families, and AmeriCorps in Tennessee

As part of its continued efforts to engage the public with national service, the [Corporation for National and Community Service's](#) (CNCS) [2016 Public Engagement, Outreach, and Education Plan](#) has designated monthly themes throughout the year, centered on CNCS focus areas.

November's theme focuses on [Veterans and Military Families](#). Serving those who served us, as well as engaging the talents of veterans and military families as national service participants, is a strategic priority for CNCS. Last year, AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers served more than 760,000 veterans and military family members and nearly 24,000 veterans continued to serve their country through AmeriCorps and Senior Corps service programs.

[Volunteer Tennessee](#) is proud to support these efforts through the Tennessee AmeriCorps programs that assist veterans and their families in need, and provide veterans opportunities to apply their abilities and skills on the home front. You can join the conversation on social media by using #VeteransServe.

How are AmeriCorps programs in Tennessee improving the lives of veterans and military families and engaging them in their communities?

- The overall goal of [Appalachia CARES AmeriCorps](#) (Rutledge, TN) is to impact and empower participants through service-learning centered around conservation and housing initiatives. Their veteran members have found great opportunities through AmeriCorps service.

After serving 14 months active duty in Iraq and six years in an emergency room, Jason Gaus decided to go back to school to pursue his passion: the Great Outdoors. While studying Forestry at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, he heard about AmeriCorps and was drawn in with the chance to serve his community while furthering his college career. He applied, and is now serving with Tennessee State Parks at Seven Islands State Birding Park. According to Jason, "The AmeriCorps program has provided me the perfect opportunity to encourage others to enjoy nature while spending time outside. The program has allowed me to reach out to the community and share my passion for nature with both people who are experienced with nature, and those who are just beginning." While his hope is to work for the National Park Service or parks on the state level, the ultimate goal is to have a job that he loves. As he puts it, "Just working outside and living my dream of enjoying my work... Just want to love what I do for a living really."



*Jason (kneeling lower right) with a group of volunteers improving trails at Seven Islands State Birding Park.*

*Photo courtesy of the Appalachia CARES*



Christy Limbaugh comes from a family with a legacy of service. "My great grandfather, Harvey Tipton Hall, is the oldest living veteran in the state of Tennessee at 102 years old. He served in the United States Army. His son (my grandfather), Leonard Parker Limbaugh followed in his footsteps serving in the Army as a paratrooper. And I have also served in the military with the United States Coast Guard. Serving our country is a family tradition on both sides of the family and it is something that gives us a lot of pride." Christy continues to serve through Appalachia CARES AmeriCorps with Tennessee State Parks.



Photo courtesy of the Appalachia CARES

- In honor of Veterans Day, [Hands On Nashville's](#) Environmental AmeriCorps member Natalie Hurd was part of a team of volunteers making energy-efficiency and home improvements to support [Operation Stand Down Tennessee's](#) Transitional Housing Program. This vital program provides support services and housing for veterans experiencing temporary homelessness. Through this project, the volunteers reduced the amount of air entering the home by an impressive 27 percent. This will save on energy costs, which can be invested towards Operation Stand Down's veterans support programming. Regarding the experience Natalie writes, "It was incredibly rewarding working alongside volunteers and Operation Stand Down Tennessee to honor Veterans Day and to serve those who have given so much to our country. This project was especially important to me because the Transitional Housing Program supports a cause I am passionate about - providing safe, affordable housing to Nashvillians." You can read more about the project on this recent [blog post](#).



Photo courtesy of Hands On Nashville

- The Making Veterans Priority program hosted by [Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation](#) (Morristown, TN) provides a wide array of services for veterans and their families, who are homeless or on the verge of becoming homeless. The program's goal is to allow veterans to improve their quality of life while giving them the resources, respect, and encouragement they deserve to live a more productive and fulfilling life.

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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](#), 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.