Member Reflection by Shaynne Pryor

AmeriCorps Member with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee
Art Advocate Program



Ever since the beginning of the summer, Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee's AmeriCorps Program has served as a template of positive change in Milwaukee's future. When I was previously a Youth Worker at one of the legacy sites, I was a part-time student engaged in one of the most troubled neighborhoods in all of Milwaukee. Since the members were of African-American culture, I was able to easily blend and relate to them with ease. However, when I was introduced to the Boys and Girls Clubs' AmeriCorps program for this summer, my experience from the initial time at the legacy sites as a Youth Worker quickly became something of another world.

When I transitioned to Mitchell CLC, everything was different. Not only had I been stationed in another part of the city, but I was also introduced to another culture and lifestyle. Most of the students who attended the Club were Hispanic and spoke fluent Spanish – neither of which I could partake in.

At first, it was a little rough transitioning into the culture shock. With both staff and students assuming I spoke Spanish and was Puerto Rican, it was hard for me to convince them of my African-American roots and culture. After two or so weeks of persuasion, I was finally able to get them to understand that I was unexposed to their culture and further needed guidance to relate.

Once I got the ball rolling, my experience at Mitchell became something remarkable. The students were friendly and helped me transition into the Hispanic culture and embark on new journeys toward positive change. Through the development of our culminating event, roughly 150 students and I worked on themed piñatas by grade level and brought to them meaning and value. With the end of the year celebration quickly approaching, I am confident that the students at Mitchell CLC are excited to share both

their recipes for making piñatas and their pride in the Hispanic culture to their communities around them.

Thanks to the AmeriCorps program, my cohorts and I were able to spark change in the communities that try so hard to destroy our youth. From the hot sweaty days cooped up in the art room for 8 hours to the glorious celebration of Hispanic culture and lifestyles, the AmeriCorps program has been a huge help in filling the gap between racial differences and socio-economic backgrounds in so many ways. With this teaching, my cohorts and I will be able to spark change in the communities we live in and the world. Thanks, AmeriCorps!