



2016-2017 AmeriCorps Member Reflection

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AmeriCorps Member with the Milwaukee Christian Center

I'm serving my second term with Milwaukee Christian Center's YouthBuild/AmeriCorps program. When I started my first term, I had a high school diploma and a driver's license, but I hadn't ever had a job and didn't have any job skills. I was also very, very shy. I hardly talked to anyone, and I didn't even like to look people in the eye.

After a few weeks in the program, I started to get more comfortable with the staff and other members, and I started to realize I could do the work. I got to see how a house goes together from the ground up. I learned how to frame, install insulation, install windows, hang dry wall, hang doors, everything that it takes. When the house was done, I got to meet the people who bought it. That was really exciting, especially when the little kids wanted to show all the members their rooms and where they were going to put their swing set in the back yard.

I have to say that I never thought of myself as the best carpenter, or the smartest person in the group; but I came every day, I arrived on time, and I listened and followed directions. I found out how this pays off when an opportunity arose in the spring of 2016. The Milwaukee Christian Center was approached to enter into a partnership with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and Veolia Corporation on a waterway clean-up project. MCC would provide the crew on the Lynyrd Skimmer, a boat that cleans debris from the rivers and Inner Harbor. Because of my excellent attendance and punctuality record, I was recommended for one of the two positions. It was wonderful work, and I got to feel like I was still serving the community in some way, keeping the rivers clean so that the community can enjoy them. The work was hot and sometimes stinky, but you forgot that when people shouted "Thanks" and waved and gave you high fives from the Riverwalk.

As the summer came to a close, and the river cleaning season came to an end, I began to think about the future. I still felt I had a lot to learn, and I wanted to continue to serve the community. What better way than to serve another AmeriCorps term? I applied for one of the three full-time AmeriCorps positions at MCC. I am now a construction site assistant. My job is to model, mentor, and motivate the part-time members. I assist the site supervisor, showing new members the basics of construction, running errands for the supervisor, and learning more advanced carpentry skills.

I can't express how much of an impact AmeriCorps service has had on me. I am no longer so shy. I can step up and talk to anyone. I am proud to look people in the eye, because I know I have made a contribution to my community, and I will always be willing to step up and volunteer, because I have learned that is how to get things done.