

# SEPTEMBER 2016



# VISTA

Volunteers In Service To America

*“By all these lovely tokens  
September days are here,  
With summer’s best weather  
and Autumn’s best of cheer.”*

-Helen Hunt Jackson

## A Snapshot of September

This September we recognized the tragedy of 9/11 and volunteered at the first annual BarberQue Event hosted by the West Humboldt Park Development Council.

Nineteen VISTAs served in the event to commemorate the day of remembrance and service by working in several of the stalls passing out clothing, giving haircuts and serving food to low-income and homeless individuals in the Chicago area. The BarberQue Event served over 300 individuals that day; donations ranged from clothing to food and over 50 volunteers.



Everyone here at Housing Action Illinois would like to thank Meghan Hinchy, the program coordinator for the BarberQue Event, The West Humboldt Park Development Council and all of the volunteers who came out and served on such a momentous day in America’s history.



A special thank you goes out to all of the VISTAs who came out in support: Avery MacGregor, Antje Lang, Abbigail Davidson, Tierra Finley, Grecia Torres, Tanya Burgess, Ashlen Olmsted, Carrie Simpson, Mark Muniz, Sam McHugh, Angela Arroyo, Willie Heineke, Alfreda Baran, Carletta Christian, Nicole Maldonado, AnaPatricia Marquez, Phillip Moore, Kevin Duffy, Natanya Pope and Ed Luna.

## VISTA Spotlight: A Tribute to 9/11 and AmeriCorps

by **Tanya Burgess**, VISTA Leader

*Never Forget.* A creed adapted for a tragedy that demanded remembrance, and what better way to remember than to serve?

On September 11th, 2001 four passenger airliners were hijacked by terrorists. Two of the planes were crashed into the North and South towers, respectively, of the World Trade Center complex in New York City. A third plane was crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia, and the fourth plane initially steered toward Washington, D.C., but crashed into a field in Stonycreek Township near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after its passengers tried to overcome the hijackers.

The September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance was launched in 2002 by the nonprofit 9/11 Day. The organization sought to encourage service on 9/11 as an annual tribute to the 9/11 victims, survivors, and those who rose up in service in response to the attacks.

In 2009, Congress designated September 11th as a National Day of Service and Remembrance under bipartisan federal law, and charged the Corporation for National and Community Service with helping to support this effort across the country. One of the Corporation for National and Community Services' largest volunteer agencies is **AmeriCorps**. In addition to supporting communities and fighting poverty, AmeriCorps creates jobs and provides pathways to opportunity for young people entering the workforce.

This year, the Housing Action Illinois AmeriCorps VISTAs volunteered at the first annual BarberQue event held in Kell's Park in Chicago. The West Humbolt Park Development Council's BarberQue event featured over 15 vendors and barbers who offered free food and complimentary haircuts to the community.

Megan Hinchy, the Development Council's Program Coordinator, estimates that we touched 300 plus lives. "9/11 was an event that shocked the nation, yet also had this powerful capability of uniting us a nation," Megan said. "We hope to unite people at BarberQue in a similar fashion."

The BarberQue event provided resources to a low-income neighborhood in Chicago and built awareness around the issue of homelessness in Chicago. Volunteers provided haircuts, shaves and shampoos, fresh clothing and shoes, toiletry packages, food packages, and a well-balanced family style barbeque meal; all services and products were donated by organizations and individuals in the community.

This 9/11 service event featured 20 different community resource representatives who offered information and assistance related to homeless shelters, clothing, food access, employment opportunities, housing, mental health and substance abuse. More than 50 volunteers came out, including 18 Housing Action Illinois AmeriCorps VISTAs. The Housing Action Illinois VISTAs volunteered throughout the day in the various tents.

Current VISTA, Grecia Torres is currently serving her year of service with the **Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law**. When asked about her past experiences with a 9/11 day of service, she shared, "I got to learn a lot about the communities around me and their actual need. We traveled to local schools in Chicago and painted the buildings and cleaned the classrooms with more than 200 other volunteers."

Each year, more than 75,000 AmeriCorps members serve in thousands of locations across all 50 states and territories. Sites range from nonprofits and schools to public agencies,

community, and faith-based organizations.

### **My Thoughts**

This is my second year participating in a 9/11 day of service, and as I thought back to 2001, I asked myself, *What is the first thing you remember about September 11th, 2001?*

I remember sitting in social studies, right next to the large window so I could while away the hours with daydreams. It was a beautiful, sunny day, and it had only just begun. I wanted so much to go outside.

Mr. Montgomery was my social studies teacher, a jolly white man who reminded me very much of Santa Claus. I was living in Indiana at the time, far from my place of birth, Baltimore. This was now my third middle school, my third social studies teacher, and he had been standing in front of the class saying something I found very unimportant. Everything was as it should be in my 8th grade class; it was another day like any other.

I don't quite remember the exact sequence of events, but my normal day quickly went very wrong. There was no announcement, there weren't people running in the streets below my

classroom window, and my teacher seemed to have the most plain and unfeeling face I'd ever seen.

In the span of two minutes and a quick conversation through the crack of a door, our class became something completely different. After a moment of exchanged whispers, Mr. Montgomery turned around sharply and, without acknowledging us as all, headed to the small TV mounted to the corner of the classroom. He said simply, "Everyone be quiet. We are going to watch this."

We watched in real time as the first responders came onto the scene. We watched as the reporters did street interviews. We watched as the cameramen panned wide to show the devastation of the crumbling buildings.

As I looked around at the other students' faces, I noticed that we all sported the same look—confusion, sadness, surprise. No one spoke, we all just sat there and watched a type of chaos unfold that was indescribable.

If I urge anything with this article, it's that once a year, if that's all you have, if that's all you can give, you serve.

## October Writing Challenge

Enjoy writing and want a spooky challenge! Then join in the **'Sticks and Stones'** 31 days of Horror challenge. Simply submit your story and it will be featured on all of our social media sites. Have fun but keep it appropriate! Scary stories can be scary without blood and guts everywhere; keep this in mind when writing. If you would like to complete the entire challenge, please do and send us some snapshots of your other submissions. Also if you'd like to write more than one story again, please do!

We have some guidelines but we encourage you to go with the flow and be creative with your delivery. Enjoy!

### Here are the rules:

1. Write a short story or poem in the month of October.
2. Short stories/poems must be at least 300 words and should no more than 1000 words.
3. Each story must be unique and not a continuation of a previous story.
4. Stories must only feature the following genres or themes – Horror, Macabre, Sci-fi, Spooky, Fantasy, Supernatural, and Seasonal (Fall/Autumn).
5. Stories must be written either in 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

*Have Fun.*





## October VISTA Calendar

Welcome to the monthly VISTA calendar; each month the newsletter is sent out, you will also receive a calendar of events, deadlines and reminders for the following month. Please keep in mind dates, events and timeframes can change; we will communicate these changes in a timely manner.

Calendar Key:

Observed HOLIDAY *Day Off	SPECIAL EVENT *Day of Service	DUE DATE *Paperwork	PEER SUPPORT *Deadline	Holiday EVENT *Work Day
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>NATIONAL BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH</b>						1
2	3 Begin Scheduling Check-ins	4 Payroll Conference Call	5 Timesheet Due Payroll Conference Call	6	7 Payroll Documents Due Sept. Monthly Report Due	8
9	10	11	12	13 Submit Sticks & Stones	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 Fall Retreat RSVPs Due	22
23	24	25	26	27 Housing Action Conference Starts Submit Sticks & Stones	28 HAI Conference	29
30	31 HALLOWEEN VISTA Leaders not in the office					

\*Full versions of the calendar will be sent as an attachment with the newsletter.

## The VISTA Corner

*WE WANT TO HERE FROM YOU!*

The VISTA Corner is a forum of communication for the Housing Action Illinois VISTAs. Write in suggestions, questions, comments, participate in challenges or simply use this as your personal VISTA forum to bring up discussions, solve problems or just chat.

Send us articles you've written, policies you've improved and any creative works. The VISTA Corner is a way to communicate among just one of many platforms, expand your knowledge or share your expertise.

How to submit to The VISTA Corner:

Please email any questions, comments or fun facts in the body of your email. If you would like to send an article, or a creative work please make sure it is sent as an attachment and not written or copy and pasted to the body of the email. Send all works to [sarah@housingactionil.org](mailto:sarah@housingactionil.org) with the subject heading of VISTA Corner.



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## Autumn

### Did You Know?

In ancient Greek mythology, there was once only one season, Spring. When Persephone was kidnapped and dragged into the underworld to become Hades' bride, Demeter, the goddess of Spring went into a depression and it caused all the plants on the earth to die and the ground to freeze over.

Persephone returns to her mother only 6 months out of the year (Spring and Summer); she returns to the underworld for the remaining months (Autumn and Winter).