

**February  
2016**

# VISTA Insider

The Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project Newsletter  
Supported by Housing Action Illinois

## SAVE THE DATE!

- February 8, 2016/17 host site renewal announcements
- February 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup>: Peer Support Calls
- February 29<sup>th</sup> Monthly Report due
- February Site Visits
- February 15<sup>h</sup>, President's Day
- February is Also Black History Month!

**Specials Thanks To:**  
AnaPatricia Marquez  
Natasha Russi  
Rachel Contos  
Amanda DiIulis

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## Looking Back on January A Letter from the Editor

January was a pretty fun month. Our VISTAs participated in two Day of Service events this month. First, some of our members volunteered on MLK Day at Cornerstone Community Outreach in Uptown. Second, a few of our members gave their time to participate in local Point in Time counts. The Point in Time Count is an event where the number of unsheltered individuals is recorded across the nation to help municipalities report need to the Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agency.

In addition to being assets to their communities, our VISTA members were cited as significant influences for IAHSPP current host sites reapplying for another VISTA cycle.

Keep the momentum going everyone! You are all doing great work!

*Robert McDonald*

## Updates and Reminders

**Peer Support Calls:** This month, we will be starting a series of bi-monthly group calls where members will be able to connect with each other about their service year experience.

**Professional Development Trainings:** Trainings will be begin to be offered in March. To learn more about the trainings and influence which trainings will be offered first, fill out the survey posted in the outreach email or at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7XSJ5HT>

**Spring VISTA Retreat/Appreciation Day:** May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016 is the day scheduled for our IAHSPP VISTA Spring Retreat. It's a little bit away, but please mark it on your calendars!

**Interested in becoming an IAHSPP Member:** If you or somebody you know is interested in joining the IAHSPP team, be sure to keep an open eye out in March for available opportunities! You can email [vista@housingactionil.org](mailto:vista@housingactionil.org) for more information.

Happy Valentine's

# HOLLA! VISTA MEMBER SHOUT-OUTS for January 2016

**Matthew Wrobel**, VISTA at Northwest Side Housing Center, built support for NWSHC's Youth organizing initiative by creating collaborations with Chicago Votes and Street-Level Youth Media.

**Samantha Michaels**, VISTA at Corporation for Supportive Housing, Story-Telling training program called "Speak UP start it's first round in January.

**Rachel Contos**, VISTA at Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, recruited for and participated in the Will County Point in Time Count.

**Clara Kent**, VISTA at Chicago Lawyers Committee For Civil Rights Under Law, assisted in the creation of an advisory council for her host site.

**Carrie Simpson**, VISTA at South Suburban Housing Center, participated in the Will County Point in Time Count.

**Perla Rodriquez**, VISTA at Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, participate in Champaign County's Point in Time Count.



Have you noticed our VISTAs doing any really cool work they should be recognized for? Is there a project you are really excited about that we didn't mention? Send us an email at [vista@housingactionil.org](mailto:vista@housingactionil.org) and we'll be sure to include it next issue!

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Actually, none of our VISTAs have birthdays this month. Instead, here is a fun list of fictional character birthdays:

Dexter Morgan, February 1st  
Arthur Weasley, February 6th  
Phoebe Buffay, February 16th  
Dana Scully, February 23rd

Source: <http://bit.ly/1KAxc6h>

Happy Valentir



# VISTA to VISTA...with Rachel Contos and Natasha Russi

**City of Origin:** Lafayette, Colorado

**College:** The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington

**Degree Concentration:** Literature and Literary Theory, and Writing and Composition I

**Favorite part about Chicago:** the architectural details that hide or reveal themselves depending on the day.

**Her VISTA Service so far:** Natasha is a VISTA at Spanish Coalition for Housing as a Development Associate, which involves aspects of grant writing, interviewing

clients and writing stories for the monthly newsletter, and ultimately developing a Key Messages and Brand Strategy (which is AMAZING!).

**Interesting tidbits:** Natasha worked as a peer writing tutor, providing support for students to develop their writing and writing process. She likes to knit, crochet, embroider, and make linocut prints because they are detailed, which is soothing.



Natasha Russi  
Spanish Coalition for  
Housing

**Rachel (talking about Natasha):** "Natasha does this awesomesauce thing where she takes an anecdote and connects it to a larger topic in a way that is intellectual, yet approachable (and she is especially good at explaining concepts mid-sentence so it doesn't seem like she's explaining it, and then by the end you think you knew the concept all along- seriously legit!). One of the most interesting parts of our conversation was hearing Natasha talk about the non-profit industrial complex. It's something I've heard of but haven't thought about much and hearing her explain its relation to a bunch of different issues was fascinating. Especially because each time she brought it up, she highlighted another intricacy of the issue."



Rachel Contos  
Alliance to End  
Homelessness

**College:** Hellenic College Holy Cross, Boston, MA

**Major:** Religious Studies

**Rachel's VISTA Service:** At the Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, Rachel works on resource development and manages the FLOW program, a program that helps residents in Permanent Supportive Housing transition to Housing Choice Vouchers when they feel ready. This program helps ensure that residents don't get trapped in PSH, and have the opportunity to stay on their feet.

**Fun Facts:** Rachel has a certificate in professional fundraising from Boston University. She likes playing with her mastiff and just made bread for the first time!

**Natasha (talking about Rachel):** "As we sat in Corner Bakery for four hours, certainly long enough for my coffee to get cold and the employees to wonder when we would be going, Rachel brought her insight and experiences to the range of our conversation. She told me a story about working at an organization that served daily meals for the homeless. One day, as she was setting up for dinner, moving tables and rushing around, she noticed a client sitting at one of the tables. Flustered and stressed by her own work, Rachel turned to him and asked "Could you help me?" The man lit up, surprised at the interruption, and agreed to help. At the end of the night, he insisted on serving Rachel dinner. As they ate together, he told her how wonderful it felt to be brought into the work and be asked to help."

# VISTA Thought Corner

**AnaPatricia Marquez is an IAHSV VISTA currently serving as the “Green Housing and Revitalization VISTA” at Mid Central Community Action in Bloomington, IL.**

## **Green tips to conserve H<sub>2</sub>O by AnaPatricia Marquez**

Conserving water is not only good for the environment, but can help you save money on utility bills, spend less time on home maintenance, and worry less about mold and mildew damage caused by leaking water.

- When using the dishwasher, always make sure it's full before running, and whenever possible, use the “light wash” cycle or the “energy-saver dry” cycle.
- When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water and fill the rinsing sink to one-third or one-half full. Avoid letting the water run continuously in the rinsing sink.
- Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or by using the defrost setting on your microwave.
- Think about the water you drink! Plastic water bottles are expensive when you compare it to free tap water. If you don't like drinking straight from the tap boil water and then chill for a later use.
- When using a sink or the shower, don't run the faucet longer than is necessary for your task. When you turn a faucet off, make sure that it is all the way off.
- Try not to take long showers; keep shower time under 10-15 minutes.
- If you hear the sound of dripping or trickling water in your apartment or notice that your faucets are leaking or your toilet is running (too long after it has been flushed) and you can't get it to stop, notify the building's maintenance staff right away.
- When using a clothes washer, try to clean full loads, when possible (or select a light-loaded setting for small loads, to use less water than would be used for a full load).

## **Amanda's Trivia Corner by Amanda DiIulis** **The ABCs of Movies**

- a. What is the title of Chef Gusteau's cookbook, as well as his motto in Ratatouille?
- b. What 80s movie has a character that Bender from Futurama is named after?
- c. In the movie Friday the 13th, what job on Crystal Lake should you not take?
- d. Which character only had 12 minutes of screen time in the original Star Wars?
- e. What out of this world movie is Universal's all-time highest grossing film?
- f. Matthew Broderick and Jennifer Grey played brother and sister in this movie.
- g. This “King of the Monsters” roar was made by rubbing a leather glove over a bass string.
- h. What is Indiana Jones' first name in the movies?
- i. Morgan Freeman's character in The Shawshank Redemption is of \_\_\_\_\_ heritage.
- j. What does the acronym J.A.R.V.I.S. from the movie The Avengers stand for?

Come back in March to find out the answers and for more trivia!

**Amanda DiIulis is an IAHSV VISTA currently serving as the “Community Engagement VISTA” at the Kenneth Young Center in Chicago, Illinois.**

Happy Valentir



**Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'**

**-Martin Luther King Jr.**

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It was a really cold day on MLK Day 2016, but a bunch of our VISTA members made it out for a Day of Service! While Natasha, Celia, Samantha and Jasmine worked in the community kitchen serving lunch and prepping for dinner, Carrie, Stephanie, Brandon and Matthew helped organize and consolidate items for Cornerstone Community Outreach's free store!

## **NEXT MONTH...**

- The VISTA Book Nook: Please send any book/movie/activity recommendations for next month's newsletter!
- Our VISTAs in the news: Let us know if you or any of your work is featured in a news article.
- Let us know if there's an article you would like to write!
- Would you like your own section in the newsletter? Advice column, crossword puzzle, quiz or activity idea section...don't be shy—let us know!

*Send to: [vista@housingactionil.org](mailto:vista@housingactionil.org)*

## **About Us...**

Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project is an AmeriCorps VISTA team made up of twenty-one member organizations throughout the state of Illinois, including: Access Living, Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County, Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Chicago Rehab Network, Claretian Associates, Corporation for Supportive Housing, HOPE Fair Housing, Kenneth Young Center, Lawyers Committee For Better Housing, Latin United Community Housing Association, Mercy Housing Lakefront, Mid Central Community Action, Northwest Side Housing Center, Respond Now, Rockford Area Habitat for Humanity, South Suburban Housing Center, Spanish Coalition for Housing, Chicago Lawyers's Committee, Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH), Housing Action Illinois.