

National Service: Supporting Veterans and Military Families



The Corporation for National and Community Service believes that supporting our nation's troops, veterans, and military families is critical to our national security and to strengthening our communities.

It is vital that Americans better understand what our troops, veterans, and their families are facing – and use that knowledge to better support them through service. Recognizing this obligation, and understanding the key role that the military community plays in creating solutions to pressing problems, the Corporation for National and Community Service has made veterans and military families one of its key strategic priorities.

Building on its past experience working with veterans, and carrying out the goals of the Serve America Act, the Corporation is increasing its support of programs that serve veterans and military families, or that engage veterans in service. Through grants, special initiatives, days of service, and other efforts, the Corporation is committed to assisting those who have bravely served our nation.

VETERANS: As Americans, we are indebted to the brave men and women who have made tremendous sacrifices to protect our freedoms. Veterans are valuable assets to their communities and research shows that connecting recent veterans to volunteer service helps them transition back to civilian life. The Corporation is working to tap the talent and leadership of veterans to solve problems at home by engaging more veterans in service through AmeriCorps and other programs. Volunteers and national service participants are also providing critical support to veterans by connecting them to jobs, housing, health care, and other services; visiting wounded veterans in hospitals; driving veterans to VA medical facilities; building or repairing veterans housing; and providing shelter and services to homeless veterans.

ACTIVE DUTY: Our servicemen and women risk everything to protect America. Having volunteered to serve this great country, it is our duty to return that sacrifice by volunteering in their honor. Volunteers support our troops here and abroad by writing

letters, sending care packages, donating calling cards, and taking other actions.

MILITARY FAMILIES: Millions of military family members reside in locations around the globe, and these families provide invaluable support to our servicemen and women during perilous times. When service members are deployed, they often leave behind spouses, children, and parents who must try to maintain life as usual while their loved one is away. In addition, many military families need to move into new communities without the support of local family and friends.

Military families have many needs that can be met by volunteers. Among other activities, volunteers can help with errands, prepare meals, offer professional services, serve as tutors or mentors, and connect family members to employment opportunities or other local services. The Corporation seeks to expand its support for military families, by increasing economic opportunities for military spouses and providing educational support for children of military families.

Sample Projects

Washington State Veterans Corps

Working with the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs, 32 AmeriCorps members, mostly veterans, help address the needs of military families and support victims of traumatic brain injuries. Additionally, college-based Vet Corps members help create a veteran community on campuses and provide resources and referrals to service for veterans and their families.

Senior Corps and Veterans

More than 8,000 Senior Corps members participate in over 500 projects in 703 Veterans Administration facilities annually. These volunteers assist elderly and disabled veterans, help military retirees acclimate to life after active duty, and provide transportation to former servicemen and women in need of medical treatment. Senior Corps also engages thousands of veterans in service through its RSVP, Foster Grandparent, and Senior Companion Programs.

American Legion Auxiliary Call to Service Corps Consortium

The Corporation is now in the second year of a partnership with the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA). The ALA operates an AmeriCorps Call to Service Consortium that engages 14 organizations in veterans-related national service. In 2009-2010, there were 19 AmeriCorps VISTA members serving in 9 states supporting veterans and military families in services related to poverty alleviation. In 2010-2011, this partnership will expand to 40 AmeriCorps VISTAs and a multi-state AmeriCorps grant, allowing more veterans and military families to be served.

Operation Welcome Home, CA

Nearly 30,000 California veterans separate from military service each year. The California Department of Veterans Affairs has launched Operation Welcome Home to help these veterans successfully re-enter civilian life. This year, the program will engage 80 AmeriCorps members to conduct outreach to recently returned veterans, connect them with jobs, housing, health care, and other services; coordinate with state agencies; and mobilize volunteers to support veterans. Other states are setting up Veterans Corps programs under the veterans' priority set in the Serve America Act.

Learn and Serve America and Veterans

Students in Learn and Serve America grantee programs learn about and take action to address issues facing veterans and their families. They collect supplies to create and send care packages, perform research to design educational materials and exhibits, and conduct interviews with veterans to document their war-time experience, preserving their memories and life lessons for future generations.

AmeriCorps VISTA and United Way, Augusta, GA

AmeriCorps VISTA members serving with the United Way of Augusta, Georgia are assisting active duty military service personnel, their families, and veterans navigate the higher education system and gain new job skills. Veterans serving with United Way and AmeriCorps VISTA are helping fellow veterans transition out of homelessness by providing mentoring and vocational training.

Helpful Resources

Corporation for National and Community Service

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/serveamerica/veterans.asp>

2011 AmeriCorps Grant Opportunities for Veterans

http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=83

United We Serve

<http://www.serve.gov/vets.asp>

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