

AmeriCorps Alums Recognized During Inaugural Washington AmeriCorps Week



Carolyn Benard was recognized by the Washington Commission for National and Community Service and AmeriCorps Alums during National AmeriCorps Week for exemplary contributions, dedication and leadership in the development of new Alum chapters in Washington State. Following her AmeriCorps experience, Carolyn served as a project supervisor for an AmeriCorps program, and currently works for the Washington Service Corps program and helps to administer the Washington Reading Corps. Last year, Carolyn led a team of members to Alabama to help with hurricane recovery efforts.

Thelma and Russ Blanchette were nominated by the Cowlitz AmeriCorps Network for outstanding contributions to their community as citizen volunteers following AmeriCorps. **Russ Blanchette** volunteers with the Cowlitz County Citizens Group as a member of the Quality Review Team which monitors mental and health services in Cowlitz County, giving feedback to providers to support optimal services for a growing number of clients. He also conducts depression group workshops for NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) and his classes have been of great value to both those suffering from a mental health disorder, as well as their friends and family. Kelso Lions is another passion of Russ's. He is a past President and active member, involved in a wealth of endeavors including vision and hearing conservation, education, and remediation programs, wheel chair ramp construction projects, supports to local youth athletic groups, fund raising for scholarships and other community initiatives. **Thelma Blanchette** finds time for volunteer work like staffing the Kelso Lion's Club concession stand to generate funds for scholarships for local students. She is active with FISH, a faith-based group that distributes food and clothing, and secures critical dental and medical care, and provides emergency prescriptions to Cowlitz County's neediest residents. Thelma currently serves as Treasurer for the local NAMI chapter where she brings her expertise, born of a long career in banking and finance, to the group.



Danielle Bonner was made for service. She has a servant's heart and is endlessly talented and gifted. When Danielle walks into a room it brightens. She brings a sense of grace and dignity to everyone she serves. Danielle sees no obstacles in service. Danielle served for three years in the Federal Way Public Schools AmeriCorps program (VISTA, VISTA Leader, and AmeriCorps member) before being hired as the AmeriCorps Supervisor. The idea that she served for three years and was promoted to a supervisory position speaks volumes of why Danielle is deserving of the AmeriCorps Alum special recognition award. She has modeled faithfully a commitment to service and volunteerism.



Doug Copley is recognized for the leadership he provided to the communities ravaged by the tsunami on the coast of India. As a Global Village Leader, Doug was the construction lead on the first team to enter the area damaged by the tsunami. His team was instrumental in getting the preliminary work done for hundreds of volunteer work teams that would follow. In 2006, Doug worked on the Jimmy Carter Work Project to build 100 homes in Lonavala, India. Doug also uses carpentry skills when volunteering for an organization called Rebuilding Together. Doug helps senior citizens and disabled homeowners maintain ownership of their homes by making repairs for those who are unable to afford or do the work themselves.



Missy Gresen has continued her after serving three years as a staff person for two Washington AmeriCorps in Wenatchee and AmeriCorps in Olympia. Her the twenty AmeriCorps members she volunteering for three non-profit Thurston County Animal Shelter; and Association. Missy is an AmeriCorps “walks her talk” when it comes to



formal connection to National Service AmeriCorps member by working as a State programs – Intermountain Community Youth Services dedication to service is inspiring to supervises. Missy also spends time organizations: Habitat for Humanity, for the Washington Trails alumni and staff person who really serving her community!

Monica and Eric Holmes served at Project HomeCourt, a free after-school and summer sanctuary for elementary children in a community without a Boys and Girls Club or similar outlet at the time. Most recently, Monica is working in a marketing and public relations firm to help a philanthropist form a charitable organization. She has drawn heavily on her experiences in the Regional Service Corps (RSC) to help guide them in clarifying their mission and understanding how they can accomplish their goals. A recent note said, *“Thank you for the tremendous opportunities RSC afforded me during such formative years of my life. Eric and I truly prize our experiences and have utilized the skills we learned all those years ago in life, work, and personal relationships. I think on some level it helped us seek out and find the children that we ended up adopting too.”*



Gail Joubert was hired as a Case Manager at the Center for Career Alternatives (CCA) after spending two years as a member of the Snohomish County AmeriCorps Program. Gail works one-on-one with at-risk teens providing personalized support to gain employment, pass the GED, acquire life skills and job skills, and succeed in adulthood. Gail is pleased that she was able to find work that allowed her to provide the kind of service she enjoyed as an AmeriCorps member. It was through her time in AmeriCorps that Gail realized the importance of being a positive role model in their lives of at-risk teens and her desire to help them. Gail finds great joy in being part of the solution for our community's kids and is proud that AmeriCorps paved her way.

Lauren McGowan is an AmeriCorps Alumni of Solid Ground's 2003-2004 Washington Reading Corps program. She served at Seahurst Elementary in Burien, WA where she proved herself to be a proactive, engaged and involved member with a true commitment to service. Upon graduation, Lauren continued her service as a VISTA member with the Martin Luther King VISTA Corps at Solid Ground. She served at the United Way with their Earned Income Tax Credit program. Lauren remained connected with the Washington Reading Corps and headed up an Inter-Corps Council to bring AmeriCorps and VISTA members together from around Washington State. After her AmeriCorps and VISTA service, Lauren began working full-time with the Earned Income Tax Credit program. Every year, she volunteers her time to help current AmeriCorps and VISTA volunteers fill out their tax forms accurately and file them for free. In addition, in 2006, Lauren became a board member of Solid Ground. Currently, she organized an alumni gathering in Seattle, Washington, in honor of National AmeriCorps Week.



Wanda Rochelle (pictured on the left) began working on in a social service organization called the Safe Streets Campaign located in Tacoma immediately following her AmeriCorps terms of service. This position led her to volunteer her time serving on several community coalitions, including the North Pierce County Commission Coalition and the Drug Free Communities Coalition. When she is not working or volunteering in Tacoma, Wanda spends her time volunteering for her daughter's volleyball team as a chaperone and team assistant. Wanda's ethic of service is a great example for her new co-workers and the youth on the volleyball team.