

WHAT IS AMERICORPS?



In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed the National and Community Service Trust Act which established the Corporation for National and Community Service and brought the full range of domestic community service programs under the umbrella of one central organization.

This legislation built on the first National Service Act signed by President H.W. Bush in 1990. It also formally launched AmeriCorps (pronounced ameri-core), a **'network of national service programs that engage Americans in intensive service to meet the nation's critical needs in education, public safety, health and the environment.'**

In September 1994, the first class of AmeriCorps members - 20,000 strong began serving in more than 1,000 communities. On July 3, 2003, President Bush signed the **Strengthen AmeriCorps Program Act**, which nearly doubled the number of AmeriCorps members. By establishing new accounting guidelines for making AmeriCorps Education awards from the National Service Trust, the Corporation can now authorize approximately twice as many AmeriCorps positions in all categories. The legislation was the product of extensive, cooperative discussions with the Administration and a sign of the strong bipartisan support for AmeriCorps.

DID YOU KNOW?

- 1) AmeriCorps are legally termed **VOLUNTEERS**? They are NOT employees.
- 2) AmeriCorps receive stipends as high as \$11,000, college education assistance, health care and day care assistance depending on eligibility
- 3) Each AmeriCorps will receive leadership and civic training

IN HOLLAND, MICHIGAN: WHAT DOES AMERICORPS LOOK LIKE?

In response to two reports in 2003, the Ottawa County Needs Assessment and Hardwired to Connect by the Commission on Children At Risk, **Good Samaritan Ministries developed the Faith in Youth Partnership**. The Faith in Youth Partnership addresses the identified shortage of youth programs that support positive value and promotes programs in which committed people give of their time and model good behavior. The goal is to support the academic and social competencies of middle school youth through mentoring relationships.



The Faith in Youth Partnership is a collaborative initiative with Good Samaritan Ministries, the area middle schools, six churches and the AmeriCorps program. The Faith in Youth Partnership is a mentoring program for middle school youth with the goal of improving academic achievement and promoting a sense of well-being. Twelve full-time AmeriCorps Members act as the bridge between the churches and the middle

school to coordinate the resources in the neighborhood churches to meet the needs of at risk middle school students.

AmeriCorps Members work in six sites across Holland and Zeeland coordinating after school recreation programs and mentoring/tutoring programs. The programs aim to foster caring, trusting relationships between adult volunteers and middle school children.

Five area churches host the AmeriCorps Members and support the program. These are:

- ❑ Urban Youth Ministries and Calvary RCA working with **East Middle School in the Holland Public School District.**
- ❑ Maple Avenue Ministries and Montello Park CRC working with **West Middle School in the Holland Public School District.**
- ❑ The Bridge Youth Ministry Center working with **City Side Middle School and Creekside Middle School in the Zeeland Public School District.**
- ❑ Harderwyk Ministries working with **Harbor Lights School and Macatawa Bay School in the West Ottawa School District.**

The mentoring and after school programs of the partners target at-risk youth – youth that are at risk because of academic standing, poverty, or household dynamics. Household dynamics may include a single parent or a two parent family where both parents are working often resulting in a young child left alone for long periods of the day. **The programs serve mostly middle school youth – youth that are too old for child care but too young to be left unattended.**

HOW DO THEY DO IT?

AmeriCorps members are responsible for engaging the resources of the church to serve youth in need. AmeriCorps Members recruit church and community members to serve as mentors, tutors, or to supervise youth in larger group settings. The Members coordinate small group mentoring and larger after school activities at the church sites using the church facilities. Members maintain a weekly presence in three area school districts, with each district allowing the Members to meet and build relationships with youth over the lunch hours.

Currently in its fourth year, the Faith in Youth Partnership has become a vital asset in the community. Through the partnership youth have found new, safe communities that care, volunteers have been enriched by reaching out to those in need, and a team of AmeriCorps Members have grown in character, professional skills, and civically because of their volunteer service.

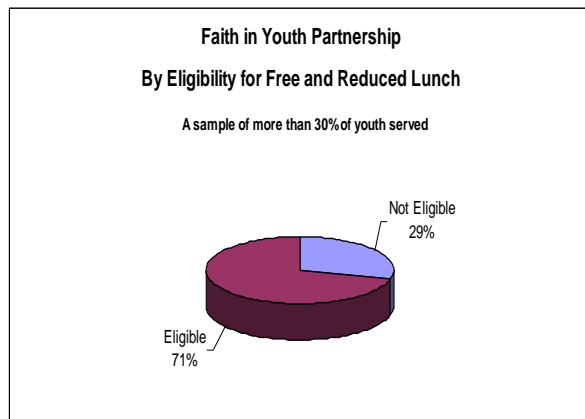
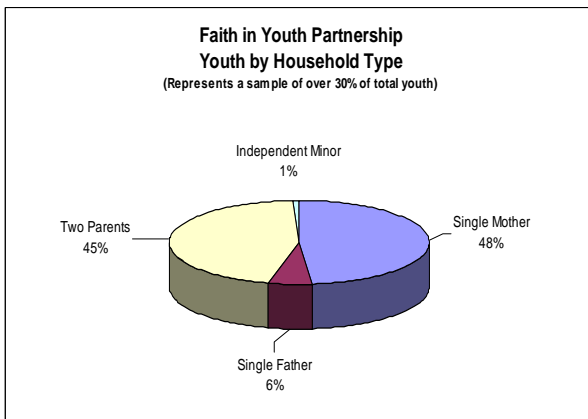
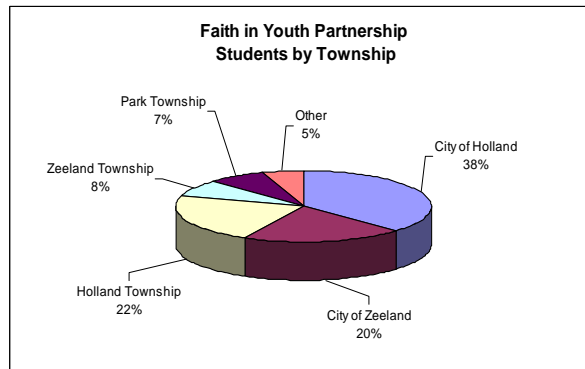
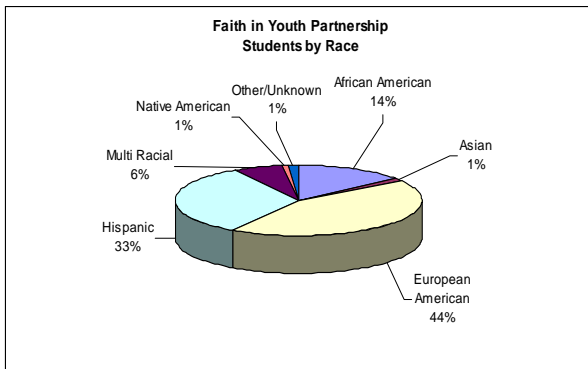
THE OUTCOMES

At the close of the second year, a total of 96 youth were served in small group or one-on-one mentoring relationships and 602 youth participated in supervised after school activities. These activities provided the opportunity for 186 volunteers to be engaged with youth in over 4,039 hours of community service. The volunteers made a significant impact on the youth, particularly the youth in mentoring relationships.

Over 81% of the youth in mentoring relationships reported having at least six of eight groups of developmental assets. These assets include support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. Furthermore, mentees also reported significant positive behavior changes with well over 75% noting an increased ability to avoid at-risk behaviors, a more positive self image, and a positive attitude toward school. Just under 70% of the youth participating in after school activities reported having 6 of the same 8 groupings of developmental assets.

THE YOUTH WE SERVE

A profile of the youth served in the Faith in Youth Partnership can be seen in the following charts:



BUDGET

In 2007-08, the projected budget for the Faith in Youth Partnership is \$252,946, of which \$170,237 would be supported by a federal grant from the National Corporation for Community Service. Good Samaritan Ministries must raise an additional \$82,709 to leverage this grant. Currently, the partner churches provide over \$25,000 of the match with additional funds coming from the City of Holland, area family foundations, area businesses, and individuals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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