



AmeriCorps Programs Ensure Healthy Futures for Tennesseans

According to the [Corporation for National and Community Service \(CNCS\)](#), “nearly half of U.S. adults don’t receive needed preventive health services, too many of our nation’s children and youth have unhealthy eating habits and don’t get enough exercise, and many of those over 65 need physical assistance to live independently in their homes.” CNCS provides much-needed services to underserved areas to help citizens improve their health, and Healthy Futures represents one of the Corporation’s [six strategic focus areas](#).

[Volunteer Tennessee](#) is proud to support national service programs that use service to support health in their communities and help Tennesseans have healthier lives. Join the conversation on social media by using #HealthyFutures.

Through [Impact America’s FocusFirst Initiative](#), AmeriCorps members ensure that children in urban and rural communities receive comprehensive vision care during their crucial formative years. This program year, Impact America - Tennessee screened 19,540 children in daycare centers and head starts across Tennessee. 1,864 children failed the screening and were referred for free or subsidized follow-up care.



Photo courtesy of Impact America



Photo courtesy of Impact America

Jenny Li, a 2016-2017 AmeriCorps member, finds it incredibly fulfilling to participate in the FocusFirst initiative. She especially enjoys meeting and working with the children at the various daycares, Pre-Ks, and Head Starts. Though children generally fear health check-ups, they love FocusFirst vision screenings. The vision screening process is simple: within ten seconds, the vision camera displays fun rainbow lights, photographs the child’s eyes, and detects vision problems like astigmatism and nearsightedness. Many children even request to be screened again! Jenny is excited to know that, due to her service, the children she finds with vision problems will be connected with the care they need in order to start school successfully.

She has found this to be a rewarding experience that has given her a unique way to provide necessary services to daycares and children across Tennessee.

AmeriCorps members with the [Community Cares AmeriCorps program hosted by Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation](#), serve at multiple agencies throughout the state and assist clients with a wide array of services that focus on home and health, as well as supportive services to the elderly, frail, challenged, and disabled citizens.



AmeriCorps member Brooke Sparks serves with the [Crossville Housing Authority](#), serving children ages 7-12 at their summer youth camp. The main focus of the camp is to engage the children in fun, healthy outdoor activities. One day each week, they partner with the health department for hikes at a state park, relay races, or nutrition education. The other days of the week are spent swimming, bowling, and other physical activities. One of the youth said bowling was the most fun he'd had since kindergarten!



For one recent nutrition activity, the children were given 23 different fruits to try and taught the different difference between a fruit and a vegetable. The kids were then all blindfolded and given a fruit to taste to see if they recognized it. The kids, and even the adults, learned a great deal about fruit varieties. Next on the fitness itinerary is a trip to the park for a soccer game.



Photos courtesy of Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation

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[Volunteer Tennessee](#) is a 25 member bipartisan board appointed by the Governor to encourage volunteerism and community service. Volunteer Tennessee pursues its mission through administration of AmeriCorps grants, training and collaborations and coalitions with public and private organizations interested in volunteerism and service. Connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

AmeriCorps is a program of the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) (CNCS), a federal agency that engages more than 5 million Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. As part of their continued efforts to engage the public with national service, CNCS has released their [2017 Public Engagement, Outreach, and Education Plan](#). As part of this plan, the agency has designated monthly themes throughout the year, centered on CNCS focus areas. June's theme focuses on [Healthy Futures](#).