

Service Corp Volunteer Spotlight

June 2022



Sarah Warner

It's a long drive from California to New Orleans. Sarah Warner made the journey from her hometown to join the Jewish service corps, Avodah, and work full time with YMCA Educational Services (YES!). Sarah's favorite part of her year of service has been the people. From the students and the staff at YES! to her housemates, the people are what helped make this year the best.

"In adult education, every single person has their whole life story. Every single person has different circumstances," Sarah said.

A highlight of the program for Sarah was when she decided to tutor a student in science because Sarah is considering being a science teacher. It was a challenge because usually people advance knowledge of science in a lower school, middle school, high school progression; but it is not always like that. The student had gaps in understanding for some of the lower level examples but had knowledge of some high level models.

Sarah recalls helping a student who was not understanding the work. The student kept saying "My brain doesn't work this way. My brain doesn't work." Sarah calmed the student and said "That's what you've been told all your life you're here now and you're here with us and see how we can help you and see how your brain works."

Sarah's plans after her year of service include continuing in school to complete a bachelor's degree in secondary education and science.

Cassie Oliver

Cassie Oliver is a YMCA Educational Services (YES!) service corp member from the Young Adult Volunteers (YAVs) of the Presbyterian Church. Cassie's favorite part of her year of service has been experiencing the true New Orleans as a whole vibrant community.

"The city has let me see the world through kaleidoscope glasses: all different colors and all different viewpoints," Cassie said.

One student who stood out to Cassie was Miss Pat. Miss Pat is the mother of 14 children. All of her children have careers while Miss Pat is still learning to read and write. When Cassie told Miss Pat that her service year was ending, she responded, "You're not allowed to leave because we want you here."

"I never knew about adult ed before I came so I've learned about adult ed and the barriers that the students face from unsafe housing to transportation issues to food insecurity to no access to proper healthcare," Cassie said. "They come in hungry or tired or hot or cold."

Cassie has been doing community education as a part of her work here. This includes helping people get food stamps, social security benefits, resume building, job applications, death certificates for family members, and many other tasks that can be hard for adults with low literacy.

Cassie's plans after her year of service are to start working as a Residence Life Coordinator at Grinnell College near her hometown in Iowa.

Abby Kiros



Abby Kiros finished her undergraduate degree at James Madison University and joined the Americorps Vista Program through Tulane University. Her year of full time service centered on learning non-profit administration through the YMCA leadership team. Abby's favorite part of her year of service has been the people she worked with and the work she did.

"It was fun to see how the YMCA actually works," Abby said. "I had this completely different idea about it in my mind. I really liked helping people and working with Collying with car seat safety."

Abby was shocked by the discrepancies that come with something as simple as car seat safety. This can range from not being able to afford a car seat to not understanding educational material. Too many children lose their lives each year in highway accidents.

Abby's plans after her year of service to begin graduate school for psychology in September at Columbia University. Ultimately, she wants to be a forensic

psychologist working in the prison system helping to improve the prison system and community policing.

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