

November 22, 2005

United Way and Bloomington Community show Hoosier Hospitality to AmeriCorps Members

It had been almost a year since the eight AmeriCorps* National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) members had slept in their own beds, but they found a home in Bloomington thanks to the generosity of the local business community. After 8 months of assisting cities across the country, the service team arrived on September 9th to help in our community. Hosted by United Way Community Services of Monroe County, they worked diligently on improvement projects at Monroe County nonprofits. The business community helped to make this possible by donating materials and services that made the team call Bloomington their home away from home.

Barry Lessow, Executive Director of United Way, was pleased that so many businesses and organizations were eager to help: "Because of their generosity, local nonprofits can better serve Monroe County citizens," he said. "Improving lives relies on collaboration from all facets of the community, and businesses consistently show their dedication to making Bloomington a better place to live."

Brad Night, owner of Bloomington Paint and Wallpaper, donated paint, trays, and other materials to assist with upkeep projects for local agencies. He felt that it was important to support these initiatives: "I appreciate the opportunity to help with any local Bloomington projects. We enjoy giving back to our community in any way we can." In addition to Bloomington Paint and Wallpaper, Lowe's donated paint for projects at Girls Scouts and Amethyst House, and Nature's Way donated paving stones for renovations at Girls Inc.

AmeriCorps*NCCC members stayed for seven weeks and completed their service in Bloomington on October 26th. Corps member John Enterline, 23, was impressed with Bloomington's warm welcome and hospitality. He excitedly reported that the townhouse and furnishings, provided by Elkins Apartments and Long's Landing, were "The best arrangements we've had all year long."

The team, in their 10th month of service, spent their rare free time at the YMCA, who donated temporary memberships for NCCC members, and they also attended a ballet through the generosity of the IU Auditorium. Cinergy provided support for the team during its stay, and Macri's and Opie Taylor's provided a complimentary meal for the eight members. John also said the team had a chance to explore Bloomington, and was impressed with the variety of shops and restaurants in the downtown area.

Originally from Ft. Wayne, Indiana, John decided to join AmeriCorps*NCCC after graduating from Notre Dame University; he wanted the chance to provide a service and see different areas of the country at the same time. About Bloomington, he commented "All of the agencies have been incredible."

Founded in 1994, AmeriCorps*NCCC is a full-time, residential, national service program in which 1,200 18- to 24-year-olds serve each year. During their 10-month term, AmeriCorps Members work in teams of 8-12 of members that address compelling, self identified community needs. These projects, usually lasting six to eight weeks each, improve the environment, enhance education, increase public safety, address unmet human needs, and assist with disaster relief. The Central Region campus in Denver, Colo., is one of five regional hubs in the United States and serves 17 states in the central part of the country.

In exchange for their service, AmeriCorps Members receive \$4,725 to help pay for college, or to pay back existing student loans. Other benefits include a small living stipend, leadership development, team building skills, increased self-confidence, and the knowledge that, through active citizenship, people can indeed make a difference.

AmeriCorps*NCCC is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. For more information about AmeriCorps*NCCC, visit the website at www.americorps.gov/nccc.

United Way Community Services of Monroe County is a nonprofit organization with the mission to improve people's lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community. Through its Community Care Fund, it allocates resources to 25 member agencies that address the most pressing human service needs in Monroe County. United Way can be reached at 812-334-8370 or www.monroeunitedway.org.