

Volunteer Organization Profile: Civic Works, Baltimore, MD

Volunteering in America 2011

The young people who work with Civic Works bring energy, enthusiasm, and a positive effect to the community around them. Civic Works connects volunteers—mostly between the ages of 18 and 25—with service projects in the Baltimore area.

Civic Works' mission is both to improve the communities of Baltimore and to empower youth by encouraging them to learn new skills and become leaders in order to create a thriving future for Baltimore. Civic Works has programs in environmental clean-up, community improvements, youth and families, energy conservation, disaster preparedness, and workforce development. By leading and giving time to these projects, youth volunteers are able to develop their skills, to improve their education and to prepare to become leaders.

Muhammed Shodeinde, an AmeriCorps member, leads the Project Lightbulb Challenge, a competition among 12 neighborhood blocks comprised of 100 participants to see who can conserve the most energy over six months. By providing energy saving tips and with the help of a little friendly competition, Muhammed helped the top residents in the winning block cut their energy use by an average of 126 kilowatts from the previous year. The success of the project and the skills he developed have made a lasting impression on Muhammed.

“The work I have done with Civic Works has been so inspiring and rewarding,” said Muhammed Shodeinde. “I have come across so many interesting people with amazing stories and lives. Day in and day out, I have also been able to collaborate with like-minded individuals who are trying to have a positive effect in the community. Planning and managing the Project Lightbulb Challenge helped me develop my skills because I had to figure out how to make an idea that was handed to me by Civic Works become real.”

Civic Works began as a Youth Corps program 18 years ago and aimed to bring young people together to learn while empowering communities. Among the many other accomplishments of Civic Works volunteers to date, 180 properties have been converted into parks and gardens; 29,809 students at 25 middle schools and high schools have benefited from tutoring; and 60 homes have been weatherized to reduce heating and cooling bills.

“The effect of Civic Works is evident both in the transformations in Baltimore neighborhoods and in the empowerment of our youth volunteers,” said Dana Stein, the executive director at Civic Works. “These young men and women have cleaned and beautified public spaces, helped homeowners save energy, tutored struggling students, fed hungry families, and much more. And in the end, the best reward is the volunteers who return and say that Civic Works changed their life or the family members of volunteers who are so proud of the changes in their sons and daughters.”

Civic Works is a Corporation for National and Community Service grantee and places around 200 AmeriCorps members every year.

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For more information about Civic Works, visit their website at www.civicworks.com. You can also email them at info@civicworks.com.

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