

Volunteer Organization Profile: Public Allies, Milwaukee, WI

Volunteering in America 2011

The nonprofit organizations that serve educational, health, and other needs in our communities are facing increased pressure to do more with fewer resources. AmeriCorps programs like Public Allies have stepped into that gap to help organizations with support and volunteers that are sorely needed.

For 16 years, Public Allies Milwaukee has identified talented and diverse young adults with a passion to make a difference in their community and has put them to work at local organizations where they help expand and improve services. This year, 33 Allies will help 32 Milwaukee organizations such as the Milwaukee Urban League, the Milwaukee Environmental Consortium, the United Way of Greater Milwaukee, and the I Have a Dream Foundation. The participants in Public Allies' AmeriCorps program serve at least four days a week at local nonprofits and receive rigorous leadership training one day a week. They help young people complete school, help formerly incarcerated individuals find jobs, organize river and park cleanups, and recruit and coordinate volunteers.

Public Allies is part of a nationwide network. Last year, for example, Allies recruited 47,090 volunteers in 21 cities who served 272,605 hours.¹ The service and volunteer time each Ally invested saved a nonprofit more than \$20,000² compared to what it would have cost for the same work without AmeriCorps support.

Daphne McPherson, a graduate of Marquette University with a degree in sociology, was an Ally in Milwaukee during 2010-11. She credits one of her professors with inspiring her passion to give back to her community and recommending that she apply to Public Allies. As an Ally, Daphne was placed with the I Have a Dream program at Clarke Street School in Milwaukee and was put in charge of recruiting volunteers.

Remembering her own experience in volunteer programs at Marquette, Daphne reached out to Milwaukee's large college-student community to fill volunteer needs in the classroom and in after-school programs. But she quickly realized she could search much closer to home: Clarke Street families and neighbors were eager to help, and critical to the program's success "What I learned as a Public Ally is that you don't need to look for people outside the community to volunteer," said Daphne. "It's great to have their help and they do wonderful things, but there are people already in the community who have so much talent and desire to get involved, you just need to ask. And they will be committed long-term."

Daphne's work at Clarke Street School is just one example of the impact Public Allies is making in Milwaukee. She was one of 35 Allies in the 2010-11 program year who together carried out more than 54,000 hours of service. Over the past two years alone, Milwaukee Allies have leveraged 7,346 volunteers and 37,320 volunteer hours to support local nonprofits. That amounts to \$666,162³ of service generated for nonprofits in 2009-2011.

¹ Number of volunteers and hours served are self reported by Public Allies AmeriCorps members and reviewed and confirmed by supervising staff.

² Dollar value provided by Monitor Institute.

³ Dollar value determined by Independent Sector's dollar value for volunteer time in Wisconsin.

Allies continue to serve after completing their year of service. Among the 3,800 graduates nationwide, more than 85 percent are pursuing careers in public service, and they volunteer more than their age cohort generally.

“The beautiful thing about AmeriCorps is that for a public investment of about \$13,000 we help a young person become an active volunteer and leader, provide full-time services to meet community needs, and help a nonprofit gain support and volunteers—work valued at over \$36,000.⁴ It is an amazing return on investment,” said Paul Schmitz, Public Allies CEO and a member of the White House Council for Community Solutions.

Public Allies, headquartered in Milwaukee, is an AmeriCorps program, which is overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Public Allies has been recognized by the Bush, Clinton, and Obama administrations as a model for other national service programs.

More information about Public Allies is available at www.publicallies.org. You can also follow Public Allies on Twitter: @PublicAllies or like Public Allies on Facebook at www.facebook.com/publicallies.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs, and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.

⁴ Dollar value provided by Monitor Institute.