Hello, VISTA!

Congratulations on becoming an AmeriCorps VISTA!! Jackson Public Schools is a great site to work with. I’ve made some excellent connections and met some fantastic people here. I’m willing to bet you have a thousand questions, though, so let’s get right to business...

YOUR JOB TITLE AND HOW TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO STUDENTS, TEACHERS, & ADMINISTRATORS.

Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA) will tell you to make sure that their name is in your title. The LEAGUE of Michigan also wants you to make sure that they’re mentioned. And, of course, you need to mention that you’re an AmeriCorps VISTA, too. That meant the title I used all year long was: MNA LEAGUE VISTA. And let me tell you, that title got me a LOT of blank stares. MNA LEAGUE VISTA as a job title might as well have included this in parentheses behind it:

(I am an AmeriCorps VISTA working with teachers and students on service learning projects through the LEAGUE Michigan. Service learning is combining community service projects with the academic curriculum.)

Because I had to say it every time I gave out that title. It was inevitably followed by one of two things: an “uh-huh” and a nod (meaning they’ve already checked out of our conversation, which is bad) or a “Oh! I’ve heard of you. I’ve had some great ideas, how can you help me out?” (which is good but rare).

My suggestion to you? Nip the thing in the bud. Give yourself a title that people can make sense of. Something like: “Service Learning Coordinator.” That title has some heft behind it and makes you sound official. Most teachers/staff aren’t interested in a ten minute explanation of your job title. More likely than not, they were simply asking what you were doing there and not looking for your life story.

Uhh… great question!
OK, OK... it’s not that bad. It’s just a little confusing to outsiders (which is pretty much everyone outside of MNA or the LEAGUE). Let’s start at the bottom with you.

So far so good, right?

Now let’s delve in. Technically, you’re serving at Jackson Public Schools. You’re stationed at Bennett Elementary (unless something has changed since I’ve written this). However, you are NOT employed by the school. The entity that pays your stipend is Michigan Nonprofit Association. MNA pays you to work on their behalf with JPS.

But wait! You work for the LEAGUE, as well. The LEAGUE is a part of MNA. MNA hosts a bunch of different non-profit organizations in one place. Campus Connect, Data Driven Detroit, and Volunteer Centers of Michigan are all different non-profits working within MNA; and most of them have AmeriCorps VISTAs working on their behalf.
How you introduce yourself depends on who you’re talking to. If you’re speaking with a community partner, it’s a good rule of thumb to identify yourself with the school you’re working with. An example: calling a community partner looking for an in-kind donation for an upcoming service learning project for a class at Cascades Elementary. It would be perfectly okay for you to say:

“Good morning! I’m the Service Learning Coordinator for Jackson Public Schools and I’m calling on behalf of Cascades Elementary.”

Sometimes the person you’re speaking with will want some additional information, which you should absolutely offer up. (Occasionally it’s to your benefit to identify yourself as an AmeriCorps VISTA, there are a few former AmeriCorps members working in Jackson!) However, the background information isn’t always necessary and can lead to confusion.

When you’re asking for some in-kind donations for the schools, you’ll have to have the **Tax-Exempt ID number**. (Normally, the organization you’re getting the donation from will tell you if they need it or not.) The school secretaries will be able to get you the Tax Exempt number if you ask for it.

Save that ID number once you have it, too!
That way you don’t have to keep asking.

If you’re talking to someone within the school, though, like a teacher or staff member, it’s perfectly fine (and recommended) to tell them that you’re an AmeriCorps VISTA working with the Jackson Public Schools.

MOST of the people you’ll be working with already have an idea of who you are and what your role is in the school. And, if they don’t know what the VISTA does—it’s a great way to start a conversation!
WHAT DO YOU DO AS AN AMERICORPS VISTA AT JPS?

By the time you get to this Legacy Binder, you’ve probably been through days and days of training and your head is swimming with facts and figures and something about a VAD and you still have absolutely NO IDEA what you’re supposed to be doing.

Have no fear, that’s why I’m here!

(Super Legacy Binder)...
Get it?

Here’s a little background information for you: when I started my year with JPS, I found out that the two previous JPS VISTAs quit before their year of service was up. Unfortunately for ME, that meant no legacy binder... and a lot of hurt feelings and annoyed teachers/principals. I cannot even tell you how many times at the beginning of the year I heard questions like: “Well, how do I know you’re not just going to leave me high and dry like the last VISTA?”

Regardless of the tension, I made it through and tried my best to repair as many of those burned bridges as I could.

Refer to your VAD a lot in the beginning. I took the key word from each section of my VAD and wrote it out in a list. For the first few months I had that list hanging right by my computer, and I referred to it daily.

I know that your VAD is different than my own was, so I’m not going to give you a lot of specifics. I’ll simply tell you that I found the best way to engage and support the teachers, students, and staff with their service learning experiences is to be there, working alongside them, helping out as needed.
Sometimes “helping out” only involves being the conduit between the community partner and the teacher, making phone calls and doing the “leg work.” But sometimes it involves going into the classroom to work with the students on their projects. You’ll see what I mean as I move through the service projects I was a part of this year!

Remember that some teachers and principals will try to utilize you to death and it’s absolutely ok to say NO to stuff if you’re overwhelmed. It sounds stupid, but I’m serious. Once word gets out that you know about grant writing, service learning, and being at events physically—your phone/email will start blowing up.

Only do what you can. You’re not a robot! Although, that would be really cool if you were.
HOW DO PEOPLE CONTACT THE VISTA?

I was assigned a JPS email address and I’m sure you’ll get one, too. You should also have an office phone number, so people can reach you there. I didn’t hesitate to give out my cell phone number, either. A big reason for giving out my personal number was because I didn’t have voicemail on my office phone AND I wasn’t always in my office, so it was easier for people to reach me on my cell. (But that’s totally your call. You definitely don’t have to do that.)

In addition to that contact information, though, there are some additional JPS VISTA things of note.

1. We have a Gmail account! I hardly used it this year, to be honest, but it’s there!
   Login: jpsvista@gmail.com
   PW: Vista2015

2. I may have not used the Gmail account much, but I used the G-drive like a madwoman. I’ve uploaded every flier, speech, and list I’ve written all year. I’ve also uploaded all the pictures I took—which is really saying something. They’re in the G-drive just as a reference for you—please browse through it. See what you like, what looks dumb, etc. Feel free to borrow anything from there that you like. That’s why it’s there!

3. We have a Weebly site! jacksonservicelearning.weebly.com Again, I didn’t really do much to it except update the blog—which I did constantly. Most of the information on the site is current, though, and shouldn’t change too much year to year. If you are techy and good with websites, I highly encourage you to play around on there. Everyone has a webpage now, right??

4. Weebly login: jpsvista@gmail.com
   PW: Vista2015
WHO TO TALK TO FIRST... SECOND... AND THIRD...

The first thing I did this year was introduce myself to the school principals. To get meetings with the principals, I called the schools and spoke to the school secretaries. The secretaries are the Gatekeepers of the school—everything goes through them.

I set up a 15 minute appointment with each principal and before I met with them, I made up a little flier about myself. On the flier I put all my contact information and a little about myself: where I went to high school, what my degree was, etc. and included a picture. (My flier is saved to the Google Drive so you have a reference!) When I met with the principals, I had a few quick questions I asked to get a feel for what level of involvement they were going to want from me, as well:

PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever worked with a VISTA before? Who?
2. What service learning or service projects have you done previously?
3. What worked/didn’t work with these projects?
4. What would you like to focus on this year? (Homelessness, Hunger, Healthy lifestyle, Environment...)
5. What do you need from me as an MNA LEAGUE VISTA?
6. Who will be my contact in building and what is the best way to get in touch with them?
The principals are a good place to start because they’ll give you connections within their schools. For me, that was a BIG DEAL because I didn’t have anything to work with. I’m about to give you the names of some GREAT teachers that I had the opportunity to work with. After you reach out to the Principals and introduce yourself, I’d shoot these guys an email to introduce yourself.

Another really great idea to run past the Principals is getting to a STAFF MEETING. You really only need five minutes to introduce yourself, pass out your informational flier with your name, picture, and contact information, talk briefly about the LEAGUE and service learning, and to let the teachers know that you’re ready and willing to help. I went to a LOT of Staff Meetings early on in the year. It’s a great way to meet the people you’ll be working with, too.

The other great thing I did was introduce myself to the Superintendent (Jeff Beal) at the SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS. Not going to lie: it’s super intense to address the school board, but it’s good to let them know who you are and what you’re doing in their school system. I had a speech written out (which is saved to the Google Drive) and just read from that, letting them know what my goals were at the beginning of the year. At the end of the school year, I addressed them again and gave them a summary of what I achieved over the course of the year. I felt it was important that they see everything I was able to help the teachers and students achieve. To get yourself on the School Board Meeting agenda, you can email or call the Superintendent’s secretary Michele Oxley.

Another good idea is to go to at least one PTA/PTO Meeting at each school. You can introduce yourself to the parents and to the teachers/staff who attend the meetings. Parents are a really great resource, too!

It’s good to note that a LOT of changes are happening within the Jackson Public Schools for the 2015-2016 school year. Some of the schools have been re-purposed. Bennett, for example, used to house K-5 students. Now they house only K-2. Teachers have had to shuffle around & things may be chaotic at the beginning of the year!
THE J.P.S. LIST

The following is the list of teachers and staff who I worked with closely over the course of the school year. This is where you should start! I’ve bolded the names of the teachers/staff I worked with directly on projects.

Bennett Elementary

Dianne Ryan
Para-professional

Dawn Rigelman
Secretary

Jacquelyn Brock
Principal

Sheri Jones
Second Grade Teacher

Paige Crowley
First Grade Teacher

Comments:
* I was very active at Bennett for 2014-2015, but a lot of changes are happening in the school for 2015-2016. Most of the students I was actively involved with are now at Northeast Elem or Parkside.

* Sheri Jones helped with the mentoring program & the FUTP60 grant writing. She is very willing to help, but might need a lot of guidance.

*Dianne and I worked on FUTP60 together.

*Paige Crowley was a teacher at Northeast Elementary. She’s moved to Bennett at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year. She & I did ADOPT-A-HERO together & we tried to do Read-n-Give in March, but that fell through due to time constraints at Northeast.
**Cascades Elementary**

Tracey Pallottini
Secretary
(517) 841-3902
TPALLOTT@jpsmail.org

Marti Kuhn
Principal
(517) 841-3900
MKUHN@jpsmail.org

Carolyn Kuehn
Third Grade Teacher
(517) 841-3923
CKUEHN@jpsmail.org

**Comments:**
* I worked closely with Carolyn Kuehn on the ADOPT-A-HERO project and a few smaller projects. She tries to do one project a month (roughly) with her class. She likes new ideas and is really great to work with. Unfortunately she had some family illness and deaths around Thanksgiving/Christmas, so we lost some momentum. She’s all about service learning, though.

---

**Frost Elementary**

Jane Sykes
Secretary
(517) 841-2602
JSYKES@jpsmail.org

Jeremy Patterson
Principal
(517) 841-2600
JPATTERS@jpsmail.org

**Comments:**
* I wasn’t able to work with Frost much. They’re a very active school & really involved in Energizing Education. But I was able to get them involved in Together We Can Make A Difference & St Vincent DePaul’s **Priceless Gift Toy Store**. PGTS starts collecting gently used/new toys in November and in early December, opens the doors to families who need Christmas presents. Jane Sykes organized a donation of about $1,000 worth of toys. Despite my reaching out to them, we never did another project together.
Hunt Elementary

Kellie Ludwig  
Secretary  
(517) 841-2612  
KLUDWIG@jpsmail.org

Mary Jo Raczkowski-Shannon  
Principal  
(517) 841-2610  
MRACZKOW@jpsmail.org

Julie Dawson  
Special Education Teacher  
(517) 841-2645  
JDAWSON@jpsmail.org

Comments:  
* I worked with Julie Dawson on the Hunt Food Drive for the AWARE Shelter. This was her first service learning project EVER and needed a lot of guidance. She did a great job though & I’m absolutely sure she’d like to be a part of another event like this.  
* I never actually met the principal, Mary Jo. She never wanted to meet with me and all the times I was at Hunt, she was always in her office.

McCulloch Academy

Julie Baker  
Principal  
(517) 841-3940  
JBAKER@jpsmail.org

Kim Weaver  
Social Worker  
(517) 841-3943  
KPORTER@jpsmail.org

Sandra Langley  
First Grade Teacher  
(517) 841-3959  
SLANGLEY@jpsmail.org

Comments:  
* I worked with these three ladies on the ADOPT-A-HERO program at the beginning of the year and later we did the Global Youth Service Day event together, too.  
* Getting a reply from these guys is HARD. I would email once or twice, maybe try a call in to them, but eventually would wind up showing up at the front desk. They’re very busy and are very concerned about overwhelming their teachers & staff.
Northeast Elementary

Melissa Paschall
Principal
(517) 841-2500
MTURNER@jpsmail.org

Heather Miller
Gifted & Talented Teacher
(517) 841-2449
HMILLER@jpsmail.org

Heather Norman
Fifth Grade Teacher
(517) 841-2757
HNORMAL@jpsmail.org

Susan Maxson
Fifth Grade Teacher
(517) 841-2756
SMAXSON@jpsmail.org

Comments:
* I met with Heather Miller once and she participated in the ADOPT A HERO program, but I never worked personally with her. She had been burned by the VISTA previous to me, and I think she didn’t trust me to follow through on things.

* Heather Norman & Susan Maxson were teachers at Bennett previously and I worked very closely with their students in the FUTP60 program. I was in their classrooms about once a week. I’m sure that they’d be interested in doing service learning projects this year!

Sharp Park Academy

Bridget Hyden
Secretary
(517) 841-2862
BHYDEN@jpsmail.org

Jennifer Oswalt
Principal
(517) 841-2860
JOSWALT@jpsmail.org

Penny Vogel
IB Coordinator
(517) 841-2886
PVOGEL@jpsmail.org

Comments:
* Mostly, Sharp Park is looking for ideas to run by the kids. They are a great school and very IB oriented. The kids are the ones who decide what projects they’re interested in working on. We did Read ‘n’ Give in March as a large scale project.

* Penny Vogel was the IB Coordinator at Parkside but Sharp Park’s Coordinator retired, so Penny is replacing her.
Middle School at Parkside

Connie Myers
Teacher/Your Supervisor
(517) 841-2383
CMYERS@jpsmail.org

Tracy White
Secretary
(517) 841-2292
TWHITE@jpsmail.org

Judith Sheets
Secretary
(517) 841-2302
JSHEETS@jpsmail.org

Kelly Cook
JPS Webmaster/Success Standard
(517) 841-2667
KCOOK@jpsmail.org

Scott Hutchins
7th Grade Principal
(517) 841-2279
SHUTCHIN@jpsmail.org

Erik Weatherwax
6th Grade Principal
(517) 841-3793
EWEATHER@jpsmail.org

Kelly Pennington
MSP Principal
(517) 841-2300
KPENNINGTON@jpsmail.org

Kristy Dillon
Parent Liaison
(517) 841-2278
KDILLON@jpsmail.org

Allison Hughes
English/Language Arts Teacher
(517) 841-2363
AHUGHES@jpsmail.org

John Brandon
Spanish Teacher
(517) 841-2360
JBRANDON@jpsmail.org

Christine Chapparo
English Second Language Teacher
(517) 841-2491
CCHAPARR@jpsmail.org

Christine Fitzgerald
Social Studies Teacher/NJHS Advisor
(517) 841-2362
CFITZGER@jpsmail.org

Susan Solo
Librarian
(517) 841-2306
SSOLO@jpsmail.org

Melissa Dunklin
Resource Room Teacher
(517) 841-2374
MDUNKLIN@jpsmail.org
**Comments:**
* I was stationed at MSP, so I clearly made a lot of connections. For the most part, the teachers seem to like anything that’s packaged and ready to go—meaning, they want something easy that they can slip into their classrooms without a lot of fuss. So a lot of the projects I did with MSP, especially, were quick & easy. For example...

*With Christine Fitzgerald & NJHS, we had the students at all three lunch periods for two days sign holiday cards for soldiers (cards donated through & collected by Operation Cuppa Joe). NJHS students manned the tables at lunch & got other students to sign.

*With Jamie Woodring, we brought in a speaker from the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills to talk to the students about what led up to the Holocaust and some of the repercussions of the Nazi’s actions.

*I worked closely with Allison Hughes & John Brandon over the year. I was one of the Mentors in the Superintendent’s Success Challenge, which works with the students deemed “high risk” due to poor attendance, grades, and attitude. My mentees joined the Builder’s Club (which Hughes & Brandon are advisors on) & we did a service learning project where they made toys for the Cascades Humane Society animals.

*Susan Solo helped out a TON during the Read ‘n’ Give book drive in March. She let me house and sort books in the Library for about two weeks. In return, she got first pick of the books (all 1,841 of them) for the MSP Library.

*Overall, everyone was very gracious and excited about working with the LEAGUE on various projects!
TA Wilson Academy

Deven Moore
Principal
(517) 841-2800
DMOORE@jpsmail.org

Kathy Shafer
Social Worker/Counselor
(517) 841-2816
KSHAFER@jpsmail.org

Mark Taylor
Teacher
(517) 841-2800
MTAYLOR2@jpsmail.org

Comments:
* Every year for the past four years, TA Wilson has participated in Global Youth Service Day (GYSD) in April. The student council organizes it, advisor is Kathy Shafer. (She's awesome.) They might need some assistance writing the grant from MNA for GYSD. Great group of kids, though. Mr. Taylor helped out at GYSD, too.

Jackson High School

Barbara Baird-Pauli
Principal
(517) 841-3701
BBAIRDPA@jpsmail.org

Amy Gish
English/Writing Teacher
(517) 841-3813
AGISH@jpsmail.org

Janeen Bush
Science Teacher
(517) 841-3851
JBUS@jpsmail.org

Beth Lawrie-Smith
Social Studies Teacher
(517) 841-3790
BLAWRIES@jpsmail.org

Kelly Caldwell
Special Education Teacher
(517) 841-3761
KCALDWE@jpsmail.org

Comments:
* I was at the high school a few times to present ideas for service projects to Amy Gish's class for two different trimesters. I also spoke at one of the JHS staff meetings. I spoke with Janeen Bush a few times about working on a recycling project, but she was really busy & things never took off. Mrs. Pauli gave me Lawrie-Smith & Caldwell's names, but I never heard anything from them, despite numerous attempts to reach them.
Dibble Elementary

Pamela Perlos
Principal
(517) 841-3970
PPERLOS@jpsmail.org

Rosie Talmage
Secretary
(517) 841-3970
RTALMAGE@jpsmail.org

Comments:
* This was the school where I was not able to get past the front office. I emailed Perlos early on in the year (when I was reaching out to the other principals) and she indicated that the teacher who had done service learning projects before had retired, so they were looking for a new teacher. Apparently no one stepped up. I emailed them a few times over the year and never heard from them, unfortunately. I went over to the school once and got to actually meet the secretary but never got any further in the school.
The Northwest Schools List

In addition to the Jackson Public Schools, I was privileged enough to work with the Northwest School District. They’ve got a contact at each building who are the Northwest Community Schools’ Service Coordinators. I also worked very closely with Amanda Kennedy at Northwest Elementary School. She is absolutely amazing!

Again, there are some BIG changes happening in the school district- they’re in the process of building a new elementary school building this summer and where there were two elementary schools there will be a “Northwest Early Elementary School” (formerly Parnall Elementary) and “Northwest Elementary School”.

Northwest Early Elementary School
(formerly Parnall Elementary)

Lorri McAlpine
Principal
(517) 817-4705
lorri.mcalpine@nwschools.org

Monica Shelton
Counselor
(517) 817-4910
monica.shelton@nwschools.org

Comments:
* Didn’t do direct service projects with Parnall, but I worked with them on their district wide projects. Monica is the Building Contact.
# Northwest Elementary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eric Kelly</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>(517) 817-4704</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eric.kelly@nwschools.org">eric.kelly@nwschools.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy O’Connell</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>(517) 817-4704</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kathy.occonnell@nwschools.org">kathy.occonnell@nwschools.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda Kennedy</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>(517) 817-4704</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amanda.kennedy@nwschools.org">amanda.kennedy@nwschools.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**

* I worked a LOT with Amanda Kennedy. She is well connected to a lot of community organizations in Jackson, but works a lot with Jackson Friendly Home (elderly ladies) & John George Home (elderly gentlemen). Her students work closely with both places over the school years. Kennedy tends to do day-long service projects. For example, she’ll take the kids to Target and let them help pick out clothes/toiletries and then they’ll go to the AWARE Shelter to drop it off. Then they’ll go eat lunch at a park and get ice cream treats. Kennedy is a TREMENDOUS resource for you.

* Kathy O’Connell is the building contact for the District service projects and contacted me for some large-scale donation projects—like their October Day of Service project where I had to get 1,000 paper bags from Meijers. She also asks for project pick-ups, too. Like a toiletries collection amongst all the schools that needs to be picked up and dropped off at St Vincent DePaul Stores, etc. They work a lot with the organization Together We Can Make A Difference (Wendy Wight).
Northwest Kidder Middle School

Dan Brooks  
Principal  
(517) 817-4703  
daniel.brooks@nwschools.org

Jessica Holbrook  
Counselor  
(517) 817-4703  
jessica.holbrook@nwschools.org

Lisa Genoa  
CI Teacher  
(517) 817-4993  
lisa.genoa@nwschools.org

Comments:
* Didn’t do direct service projects with Kidder, but I worked with them on their district wide projects. Jessica is the Building Contact.

Northwest Alternative High School

Paul Scholz  
Principal  
(517) 817-4754  
paul.scholz@nwschools.org

Sabrena Jenkins  
Secretary  
(517) 817-4754  
sabrena.jenkins@nwschools.org

Ronda (Joy) Miller  
Teacher  
(517) 817-4754  
ronda.miller@nwschools.org

Comments:
* Ronda (who goes by Joy) Miller participated in Fisher Training last year and had high hopes to do some great service learning projects this school year, then was in a car accident and was suffering from some pretty serious health problems, so she wasn’t able to get them done. She may contact you for help completing them this year. Nellie is aware of the situation, too.

*Sabrena is the Building Contact for the District Service Projects.
Northwest High School

Scott Buchler
Principal
(517) 817-4701
scott.buchler@nwschools.org

Cara Evans
Secretary
(517) 817-4839
cara.evans@nwschools.org

Elizabeth Hoffbauer
Economics Teacher
(517) 817-4838
elizabeth.hoffbauer@nwschools.org

Marnie Hade
English Language Arts Teacher
(517) 817-4833
marnie.hade@nwschools.org

Comments:
* Worked closely with Elizabeth Hoffbauer—visited several of her classes to talk about service learning projects and let them bounce ideas off of me and have me ask them questions about their projects. Part of her curriculum is to have the kids plan and execute a service learning project within their trimester. One class did a Dodgeball Tournament to raise money for Special Olympics.

*Marnie Hade is the Building Contact for the District Service Projects. She is also extremely busy! She works on several large-scale projects over the year with her students. The biggest is their Adopt-A-Family Holiday collection. Families apply and if selected, they'll get toys, food, clothes, and toiletries for the holiday season. It is a HUGE project and takes place in November & December.
The Catholic Schools

I was able to work with Lumen Christi Catholic High School and Jackson Catholic Middle School (which is located in the same building as LCCHS), as well as visiting Queen of the Miraculous Medal for a staff meeting. These are some of the parochial schools in Jackson.

I'll fully admit that one of the doors open to me getting into those schools was my uncle, Pat Neville, who's a math teacher & the boy’s Varsity Basketball coach there. The parochial schools are pretty isolated from the other Jackson schools, and the administration will be the first ones to tell you so. There’s a pretty big rivalry between Lumen and all the other high schools in Jackson, especially in regards to football. Well... sports in general.

But I also held my VISTA Year Initiative at Lumen Christi, which was really great. (We’ll get to that later!)

Queen of the Miraculous Medal School

Liz Hartley
Principal
(517) 782-2664
lhartley@myjacs.org

Ann Rice
Administrative Assistant
(517) 782-2664
arice@ueenschurch.com

Comments:
* I went into Queens for a staff meeting. They were all really nice & seemed excited about working with me... and I never heard from any of them. I contacted Mrs. Hartley later, about Read ‘n’ Give, and she sounded interested in collecting some books for the Book Drive, but I never heard from her again. I get the feeling that they’re willing, but won’t do the leg work—you’ll have to really push if you want to do something with them.
Comments:
* The first person I met at LCCHS was Jackie Lincoln & she introduced me to Fr. Dan. She was very interested in giving LCCHS kids some new service project ideas.

*I worked with Fr. Dan on the Community Service Volunteer Fair (CSVF). All LCCHS students are required to log service hours and he wanted to invite several different Jackson organizations looking for volunteers to come to the school, like a job fair, for the students to visit. The goal of this event was ultimately to raise awareness of what was in the community and give the opportunity to the students to find something that really spoke to them. The event took place in March 2015 and was a big hit.
Other School Connections in Jackson County

There are 12 school districts in Jackson. We have a few connections in some of them, not all, because let’s be realistic: there is one VISTA and no way you could serve this many schools or teachers on your own. Our main focus should be on Jackson Public Schools, but spreading the word about The LEAGUE and MNA and service learning is good, too! Just make sure you don’t spread yourself too thin!

Most of the people in this section of the list have been through Fisher Training, which is a 3-day LEAGUE led service learning training for educators. The big draw is that at the end of the training, educators walk away with a mini-grant for the 9/11 Service Day, totaling $175. They get grant experience through brainstorming, writing, and execution (which is where you’d come in). Essentially, it’s free money for their classrooms/schools to do a service learning project.

**JCISD**

Allisyn McKnight  
Lyle Torrant Center  
Teacher

(517) 768-5200  
allisyn.mcknight@jcisd.org
**Michigan Center**

Lisa Falasco  
Michigan Center High School  
Principal  
(517) 764-1440  
lisa.falasco@mccardinals.org

Matthew Desmarais  
Michigan Center High School  
English/Language Arts Teacher  
(517) 764-1440  
matthew.desmarais@mccardinals.org

Kathy Cramer  
Michigan Center High School  
Teacher/NHS Advisor  
(517) 764-1440  
Kathy.cramer@mccardinals.org

**Western**

Mary Chamberlin  
Bean Elementary  
Special Education Teacher  
(517) 841-8404  
mary.chamberlin@westernschools.org

Angela Kolb  
Warner Elementary  
Special Education Teacher  
(517) 841-8521  
angela.kolb@westernschools.org
Vandercook Lake

Nicole Blight
Vandercook Lake Middle School
Special Education Teacher
(517) 782-8167 ex.12
Nicole.blight@vandyschools.org

Brenda Cavanaugh
Vandercook Lake High School
Special Education Teacher
(517) 782-8167 ex. 155
brenda.cavanaugh@vandyschools.org

Peggie Sayre
Vandercook Lake High School
Math Teacher
(517) 782-8167 ex. 138
peggie.sayre@vandyschools.org
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

There are a couple of different documents saved to the “Information Hand Out” folder on the G-drive that are about the Community Partners. The first file is a handout called “Community Organizations List.” I created that specifically for students who are looking for places that want volunteers. I handed it out to National Honor Society kids and a couple of classrooms of students who were trying to come up with service projects. I ended up giving it to a couple of different teachers, as well. It’s come in quite handy.

The list I’m giving you in here is much more personal than that. The majority of the organizations and companies listed below are places I’ve actually been to and/or worked with. When I did the Community Service Volunteer Fair, I met a BUNCH of these organizations. I’ve tried to break them down by category as best I can but some of them are involved in more than one area. Together We Can Make A Difference, for instance, works on homelessness, poverty, community gardens, and other things, too.

When you’re contacting agencies or businesses, don’t be afraid to ask questions about what they do in the community and how they can help with whatever you’re trying to set up.

When you’re looking for in-kind donations, MOST of the bigger chain stores require 4-6 WEEKS to process a request. So stores like Meijers, Walmart, Target, CVS, etc. will have you fill out a request form (this is where the Tax Exempt ID Number will be required). Meijers requested a letter on school letter head, as well. Letter head can usually be found in the school offices (check with the secretaries).
ENVIRONMENT & GARDENING

Jackson County Conservation District
www.jacksoncd.org
(517) 784-2800
Contacts:  Kandice Karll  (517) 784-2800 ex.5
          kandice.karll@macd.org
          Lori Fitzgibbons  (517) 206-3829
          lori.fitzgibbons@mi.nacdnet.net

County of Jackson Parks Department
www.co.jackson.mi.us/parks
(517) 788-4040
Contacts:  Scott Robbins  (517) 768-2917 OR (517) 937-3767
          srobbins@co.jackson.mi.us
          Mike Hoskins  (517) 768-2917
          mhoskins@co.jackson.mi.us

Friends of the Falling Water Trail
www.fallingwatertrail.org
(517) 787-9442

Dahlem Environmental Education Center
(Volunteer hours in SPRING)
www.dahlemcenter.org
(517) 782-3453

Jackson Public Schools (Operations Dept)
1401 N. Brown St.
Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 841-2161
Contact:  Rodney Walz  (517) 937-2688
          rwalz@jpsmail.org

* Enviro-Clean (In charge of JPS waste management)
www.enviro-clean.com
Contact:  Julie Warner  (517) 206-4542
          julie.warner@enviro-clean.com
The Hobbit Place
www.thehobbitplace.com
(517) 750-9229

Beck’s Flower Shop & Gardens Inc.
www.becksflowershop.com
(517) 784-8571
Contacts: Cheryl & Gary Beck contactus@becksflowershop.com

Ace Hardware- Vandercook Lake
4595 Francis St.
Jackson, MI 49203
(517) 783-4995

EDUCATION

Energizing Education
www.energizingeducationjackson.org
(517) 841-2148
Contacts: Lois Dunning (517) 990-6072
ldunning@uwjackson.org
Charlie Miller (517) 841-2148
chacha9057@yahoo.com

Jackson Public Schools (Food Services)
www.jpsk12.org/Page/83
(517)841-2200
Contacts: Christina Wilson (517) 841-2172
cwilson@jpsmail.org
Brant Russell (517) 841-2171
brussell@jpsmail.org
ANIMALS

Cascades Humane Society
www.cascadeshumanesociety.org
(517) 787-6587
Contacts: Carmela Lazarus (517) 787-7387 ex 16
cclazarus@chspets.org

Jackson County Animal Shelter
www.co.jackson.mi.us/Agencies/HD/animal_shelter/index.asp
(517) 788-4464

HEALTH & SAFETY

American Red Cross
www.redcross-sc michigan.org
(517) 782-9486
Contacts: Megan Cadle (517) 318-7250
megan.cadle@redcross.org

Jackson YMCA
www.jacksonymca.org
(517) 784-YMCA
Contacts: Joe Finley (517) 782-0537
joe@jacksonymca.org
Melissa Quisenberry (517) 782-0537
melissa@jacksonymca.org

Allegiance Health
(Summer Program)
www.allegianchealth.org
Contact: Jenny Burmeister (517) 788-4840 ex 4840
jennifer.burmeister@allegianchealth.org

Southerncare Hospice
www.southerncarehospice.com
Contact: Kristen Cooper (517) 788-6838
kristen.cooper@southerncare.com
SENIOR SERVICES

Jackson Friendly Home
www.facebook.com/JacksonFriendlyHome
(517) 782-2616
Contacts: Carie Good (517) 783-4134
cgood@jacksonfriendlyhome.org

John George Home
www.johngeorgehome.com
(517) 783-4134
Contacts: Carie Good (517) 783-4134
cgood@johngeorgehome.com

MEDIA

J-TV (The Bart Hawley Show)
www.jtv.tv
(517) 787-8817
Contact: Karen Hawley (517) 206-1100
khawley@jtv.tv

mLive (Jackson Citizen Patriot)
www.mlive.com/jackson
Contact: Leanna Smith (517) 262-0720
lsmith12@mlive.com

MILITARY

Operation Cuppa Joe
www.operationcuppajoe.com
Contact: Julie Watrous (517) 315-1039
jrwatrous@operationcuppajoe.com
YOUTH & FAMILY

Big Brothers Big Sisters
www.bbbsjackson.org
(517) 784-7181
Contact: Melissa (517) 784-7181
office@bbbsjackson.org

disAbility Connections
www.disabilityconnect.org
(517) 782-6054

Jackson School of the Arts
www.jacksonarts.org
(517) 784-2389
Contact: Robin Sparkman (517) 784-2389
jacksonarts@sbcglobal.net

Youth Haven Ranch
www.youthhaven.org
(517) 569-3328
Contact: Stephanie Ludwig (517) 569-3328 ex. 1118
stephanieludwig@youthhaven.org

Save Our Youth, Inc
www.facebook.com/soy04.tb
(517) 240-6134
Contact: Thomas Burke (517) 240-6134
stoney616@hotmail.com

Special Olympics
www.somi.org
(517) 812-5764
Lazy B’s Youth Ranch
www.lazybeesranch.com
(517) 592-4252

Jackson Symphony Orchestra
www.jacksonsymphony.org/
(517) 782-3221
Contact: Sharon Mack (517) 782-3221
sharon.mack@jacksonsymphony.org

POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS

Interfaith Shelter
www.facebook.com/interfaithshelter
(517) 789-8735

Habitat for Humanity
www.jacksonhabitat.org
(517) 784-6620
Contacts: Leanne Prout (517) 784-6620 OR (517) 784-7640
lprout@jacksonhabitat.org

United Way of Jackson
www.uwjackson.org
(517) 784-0511
Contacts: Stephanie Schiro (517) 796-5120
sschiro@uwjackson.org

St. Vincent De Paul Society/Store
www.svdpjackson.com
(517) 784-0609
Contact: David Kemler (517) 784-8377
dkemler@svdpjackson.com
Together We Can Make A Difference
www.togetherdifference.org
(517) 740-8444
Contacts:  Wendy Wight (517) 740-8444
           hope@togetherdifference.org

PUBLIC SERVICE OFFICERS

Earl Poleski
State Representative (64th District)
(517) 373-1795
(517) 262-8955
earlpoleski@house.mi.gov

Christopher Ermatinger
Assistant Fire Chief
Jackson Fire Department
(517) 788-4150 ex. 2703
cermatinger@cityofjackson.org

Lt. Elmer Hitt
Jackson Police Department
(517) 768-8721
ehitt@cityofjackson.org

Dan Bowman
Community Services Trooper
Michigan State Police
(517) 780-4580
BowmanD5@michigan.gov
SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS...

AND YOU!

FINALLY we get to the good stuff. Lemme tell you, slogging through that last bit—all those names and numbers and everything? That’s SUPER important stuff but it’s wicked boring. The best parts of this year involved students, teachers, and being out in the community, having fun and helping those who needed it.

My first project of the year came as a result of a mini-grant from MNA. Over the course of the school year, there are several mini-grants that MNA will offer to teachers and their classrooms: **9-11 Day of Service Mini-Grant, Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service Mini-Grant** (in January), and **Global Youth Service Day Mini-Grant** (in April).

Your job will be to inform the teachers that these grants are available, and sometimes to help the teachers write them. (Don’t freak out if you’ve never done a grant before—it’s really not too bad. We’ll go over those, too.) MNA will email you when these grants become available to apply for, usually about a month or month and a half before the Day of Service, and they’re all completed online.

When you start your year of service, the mini-grants for 9-11 should already be in and be in the process of evaluation. You’ll get an email from someone at MNA letting you know who’s been awarded the grants and you’ll need to reach out to the recipients to see who needs your help completing their projects.

Again, some of the teachers won’t require your assistance, but some of them might ask if you want to tag along. The choice is completely up to you at that point. You are in no way required to participate in **EVERY SINGLE EVENT** that takes place over the year (in fact, there’s no way that you possibly could!). HOWEVER!! My suggestion to you is to go. Get involved. Help the teacher however s/he needs you to and get to know the students.

Sometimes the best thing you can do...

...is just be there!
The first event I did...

Northwest Elementary School at Jackson Friendly Home: Building a Garden

Let’s start out this story by saying I had no idea what I was walking into. I was nervous to meet everyone, didn’t know how many students there were going to be—nothing! I knew that I would be helping out Amanda Kennedy and her students. But let’s start at the beginning of this tale.

Mandy and I had met a few weeks earlier when I contacted her about her 9-11 grant. She told me that she was taking her students and another class from NWEL to Jackson Friendly Home. She asked me if I could try and get some potting soil, seeds, and bulbs for the students to plant because JFH wanted a garden for the ladies in the Spring.

Talk about throwing myself into the deep end of the pool!

I got on the phone and started calling garden centers and flower shops all over Jackson about three weeks before the actual event. I struck gold when I called Ace Hardware in Vandercook Lake: Sue (owner and operator) offered me last season’s seeds and some large bags of potting soil FOR FREE. I hopped in my car and drove over immediately to pick them up, then drove them to Jackson Friendly Home. I felt like a superstar!

But… no bulbs to be found. The problem was that we were off season. I’m not a gardener by any stretch of the imagination—I only know this because of what the other stores were telling me.

Eventually, I wound up calling Home Depot in Jackson. I talked to one of the managers in the Garden Center and he told me about this offer that the store has for non-profits (like schools). If you come in and spend over $25 on merchandise (even just $25.01) you get $25 off your purchase. So, essentially, you’re spending a penny to get $25 worth of merchandise. I immediately called Mandy to let her know and she was able to go to Home Depot and pick up four bags of daffodil and tulip bulbs.

The morning of Friday, September 19, 2014, I drove up to Jackson Friendly Home, excited and nervous...
NWEL AT JACKSON FRIENDLY HOME
September 19, 2014
Mrs. Kennedy & Mr. Bartlett’s classes (about 30 students) working in the backyard garden

Mr. Bartlett

Left: The JFH ladies, JFH staff, and NWEL students making peanut butter/pinecone bird feeders
Above: NWEL student hangs the bird feeders for the squirrels to eat. (*Note: squirrels are jerks.)

Students & residents worked together to improve the JFH backyard.
The students worked hard, the residents loved having them around, & together they planted a flower bed, made a raised planter box for seeds, stained the gazebo, made bird feeders & houses, painted the ladies’ nails, & played games together. Then the students hopped on the bus to travel to the John George Home to hang out with the gentlemen residents there! (Which, unfortunately, I couldn’t attend.)

This event was featured on mLive: www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2014/09/project_serving_seniors_helps.html#incart_river
Just a quick word about

Organization...

I highly recommend having a day planner, wall calendar, or utilizing your phone’s calendar—anything to keep you organized. There’s going to be a LOT going on during your service year!! I had a calendar hanging on my wall, a daily planner that came everywhere with me, and I used the Asana app. Having those three things up-to-date kept me on task and never had me double booking anything.

After that first event with Northwest Elementary, my days were incredibly busy. I had at least two events scheduled every day in September (and pretty much every day after until school let out in June). I had meetings with teachers and principals, Staff Meetings, PTA/PTO meetings, and service learning events—I was everywhere and loving it. The September School Board meeting was the one where I introduced myself to the Board (and everyone else who was there), as well.

I also started the Fuel Up to Play 60 year with Bennett Elementary at the end of September. FUTP60 is a national organization that works with the National Football League and United Dairy Council to help students eat healthier and be active for at least 60 minutes a day. Principal Jacquelyn (Jackie) Brock was very passionate about it and had me coming in almost every week to work with “at-risk” 4th and 5th grade students. (At-risk meaning that these students were not achieving due to poor attendance, poor attitude, poor grades, or a combination thereof.) There were 18 students that I worked with to begin with, and they were called the Student Captains.

Through FUTP60, teacher Sheri Jones & I got a $1,062 grant for school improvements, a $500 gift card to buy FUTP60 t-shirts & bags for students, and received a grant to take 6 students & 3 teachers to Ford Field on September 29, 2015 for the Kick-Off Rally where the kids will get to meet Lions players, go onto Ford Field, and participate in all sorts of fun activities! The kids are SO excited.
THE KICK-OFF RALLY
9/26/2014

The first thing I did with the Student Captains, officially, was help them make posters about FUTP60 to be displayed all over the school & in classrooms. I worked with the fourth graders one day and the fifth graders the next.

Then we had the Kick-Off assembly on that Friday afternoon. The Student Captains were in a skit where they were Being Active in front of the school: jumping on trampolines, jumping rope, hula hooping, bouncing basketballs, dancing, etc.

The Kick-Off Event was featured on mLive: www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2014/10/year-long_fuel_up_to_play_60_p.html
The Student Captains showing off their moves!

Above: Jesse & Luke showing off their posters!
Right: Mackenzie G. bouncing on the trampoline!
Over the course of the year, I worked with the kids on an almost weekly basis. We had three main goals every month:

1. **Choose a Healthy Food of the Month.**
2. **Make a Healthy Recipe using the Healthy Food of the Month.**
3. **Work on In-Class Physical Activity Breaks that the Captains could teach to their classrooms.**

At our meetings we would work on those, as well as occasionally talking about teamwork or respect. The Student Captains also each had to sign the Student Captain Promise that talked about the expectations of them to be leaders in the school. Pretty much everything I worked with them on is in the FUTP60 folder on the Google Drive, too!
In-Class Presentations about The LEAGUE

Occasionally a teacher will ask you to come into their classroom and speak about what service learning is and/or community service project opportunities for their students. The first of these presentations that I gave in a classroom was for Connie Myers (my/your supervisor) in October 2014. I prepared a short Power-point presentation meant for students that explains what philanthropy is and helps them to start brainstorming about what they want to do in their communities. The students I worked with were fairly receptive and came up with some good ideas. (The Power-point for students is saved on the Google Drive under the Information Hand Outs folder as “LEAGUE VISTA Presentation Kids”.) I also ended up giving similar presentations at Jackson High School, Northwest High School, and Northwest Elementary School.

The Media and Service Learning Projects

It’s always a good idea to showcase what your students and teachers are doing. A fantastic connection for you will be The Citizen Patriot mLive reporter Leanne Smith. She is usually willing to come to larger-scale events if her schedule permits (or she’ll send someone to do it), but she’ll always write up any event you do with students. Stories on mLive are always good publicity for the schools, teachers—and what student doesn’t like to have their picture featured on the news?! I love taking pictures, so I was always snapping away during events. I would choose my favorites and have Smith post them with the story. In the email to Smith I would give her details, as well: who (teacher, grade level), what the service project is/was, when it took place, where (school) and why? I tried to include a quote or two from someone as well; maybe from the teacher or principal of the school.

Sometimes there are students who absolutely CANNOT be filmed or pictured. More often than not, teachers will be able to point out who these students are, so don’t hesitate to ask right away.
OCTOBER & MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY

USA Today started Make A Difference Day to “inspire the nation to make a difference.” It is always the fourth Saturday in October. This year (2015) it’s going to be October 24. (www.makeadifferenceday.com) This is a great opportunity for classrooms and teachers to start teaching students about service learning for the school year. (If they haven’t already!)

Northwest District Schools had their Service Day on October 21, 2014. They decorated bags for Together We Can Make A Difference’s Priceless Gift Toy Store. This was organized between Kathy O’Connell at NWEL and TWCMAD’s Wendy Wight.

I was able to secure a donation of 1,000 paper bags from Meijers on Airport Rd. for this event. I had to fill out a request form and include a letter talking about what the project was on Northwest letterhead. I also needed their Tax Exempt ID Number.

On that Tuesday, I went to Northwest Elementary School and Parnall Elementary School and took pictures of the students as they were decorating the bags. Kidder Middle School, Northwest Alternative High School, and Northwest High School also participated, but I wasn’t able to attend all as it was happening at the same time.

The Northwest Service Day was also featured on mLive: www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2014/10/christmas_comes_early_northwes.html

Students from NWEL worked with Parnall students on this service learning project!
Students were paired off by grade—older students were assisting younger students.
As a THANK YOU to Meijers for their donation of 1,000 grocery bags, the kids signed a large poster that I took to the Airport Rd. Meijers after the event.
CASCADES HUMANE SOCIETY TOUR & DONATIONS WITH NORTHWEST ELEMENTARY & NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL
OCTOBER 30, 2014

NWHS & NWEL traveled to Cascades Humane Society after making dog & cat treats and toys in class to donate to the shelter. I was also able to get some donations for the shelter as well. I went to the Humane Society with the students & teachers to get a “behind the scenes tour” and got to meet some of the cats and dogs housed there.

The link to the mLive article:
Above: The NW students pose with Carmela Lazarus, the director of the Cascades Humane Society.

Right: Students pose with a kitten!

Below: NW students and some donations for the Humane Society.
Pick Up & Deliveries

As a VISTA, you may get asked if you pick up and deliver projects. This particular aspect of the job is totally up to you. It’s not really a part of our specific job duties, but I used to help the schools out on occasion. Coat drives, food drives, art projects for senior homes, toiletries drives... my car & I delivered them all.

Above Left: Cascades Elementary toiletries drive for First Baptist Church in Jackson (01/2015)

Above: Decorations from NWEL & Parnall delivered to Together We Can Make A Difference to brighten up senior homes in the Spring! (3/2015)

Left: A badly lit selfie in my car stuffed with winter clothes from NW Schools for AWARE & Inter-faith Shelters (1/2015)
Jackson has its own television station, J-TV. It broadcasts locally and online. One of the biggest shows on J-TV is The Bart Hawley Show. Mr. Hawley is the talk show host and his wife, Karen Hawley, is the producer. She books all his guests and keeps his appointments. The studio is in downtown Jackson on Michigan Avenue. Karen has a spot every month during the school year for The LEAGUE. It's usually the third Wednesday of each month. We get to bring on a teacher and students who want to talk about what Service Learning Projects they’re doing. It’s a fantastic opportunity for them (and us!) to let the Jackson community know what’s going on. Plus, it’s fun.

I communicated with Karen through email, usually, and she’d give me the dates for the LEAGUE interviews. Around the beginning of each month, I’d start contacting different teachers to see who would be able to participate. Transportation is always REALLY difficult for schools and since the interviews take place during the school day, there were always some logistics to work out. Unfortunately, there were a few months where I just could not get anyone to commit to going, which was extremely frustrating. However, I was able to get five interviews done over the course of the school year.

Some things to remember:

1. There can be no more than FOUR guests, total. If your students are high schoolers, four students are fine. Middle school or younger requires no more than three students and a teacher to be interviewed with them. (This is to ensure that the interview goes more smoothly and the young students don’t freeze up on camera.)

   a. Also, make sure that you send a list of who’s being interviewed to Karen as soon as you know who’s going to be on. Always DOUBLE CHECK how their names are spelled!!

2. Before the show you can email pictures/short videos to Karen to be presented during the interview. (Have to be in before noon the day before the show tapes!) This is great if the project the guests are talking about has already happened, but isn’t always necessary.

3. You should be present at the taping of the show but you don’t ever have to be on it, if you’d prefer not to be.

4. The show is taped live and streams online for a full 24-hours.

5. DVDs of the show are available for purchase ($10).
Hoffbauer’s students came on to talk about the service events they had planned for the upcoming year, including their Dodgeball for Special Olympics event!
Kennedy’s students Kalomb & Maddie were on to talk about all the work they were doing at JFH with Mrs. Kennedy and what they planned on for the rest of the year!
FUTP60 Student Captains Chloe, Dectrick, Luvmarr, & Principal Jackie Brock were on to talk about what FUTP60 had accomplished over the school year!
TA Wilson students Brandin, Arthon, Wanna, and Jakayla were on to talk about their GYSD Project Green & Go and the other events they’d completed at TA Wilson over the year.
Because Mrs. Kuehn had no way to get herself and her students to the J-TV station, Mr. Hawley came to their school! While he was there, the kids were working on art projects for Operation Cuppa Joe. Mr. Hawley also interviewed other classrooms about the Adopt-A-Hero program!
Grant Writing 101
The VERY Basics

First things, first: don’t freak out about grant writing. It can be tough and it certainly takes time and dedication, but it’s not as horrifying as everyone says it is. *Especially* depending on the grants you are writing. I only did three this year, and assisted on another one, but they weren’t so bad. I also had the opportunity to sit on the other side of the grant review with MNA and approve/deny some grants (which was tremendously helpful—I highly recommend doing that if you’re able!). So, I’m going to try and break it down (a little) for you here:

1. **TAKE YOUR TIME.** Research what you’re writing about. Think before you submit.

2. **HAVE A CLEAR IDEA IN YOUR HEAD.** Don’t be vague in your grants. Have a clear-cut idea mapped out before you start typing.

3. **DOUBLE AND TRIPLE CHECK BEFORE SUBMITTING.** Spell check, for the love of everything. *Spell check.* Have someone else take a glance at your proposal. Have several someone elses look at it. The more eyes the better. If they don’t understand what you’re saying, neither will the grant reviewers.

The thing about grants is that no grant is ever the same. Some will want long narratives with lots of data to support whatever it is you’re asking for. Some are more “luck of the draw” and just want the basic information.

The biggest help I can give you about grant writing is to be patient with yourself and to be *ridiculously* thorough. Read through the request a few times, ask any questions you need (either to someone in your VISTA circle or to the people you’re requesting the grant from), and be flexible with changes!

**There is a document I typed up for teachers who are doing grant writing called “Grant Writing Tips” in the Information Hand Outs folder on the Google Drive, too.**
Elizabeth Hoffbauer's Economics classes have to choose an organization or program to raise money for or get donations to. This particular class wanted to raise money for the Special Olympics by hosting a Dodgeball Tournament. Their goal was to send kids to summer camp. They were able to raise $1,500 through entry fees and a bake sale!
**Above Left:** The NW Lunchladies were a team!

**Above Right:** The Pink Panthers ultimately won the title.

**mLive link:**
MSP Cards for Troops
12/8-12/10/2014

Parkside students during lunch periods signed holiday cards for Operation Cuppa Joe to deliver to soldiers & veterans. ROTC students were among the many who signed & the signing was led by National Junior Honor Society members!

Because of AWARE Shelter rules, students cannot go inside. (In fact, unless you’re expressly invited & sign a confidentially notice, you won’t be invited in either.) So, instead, NWEL traveled to Target with their teachers to buy presents for the women & children residing at the shelter. We bought pajamas & toiletries & socks & all sorts of things! Then, at the shelter after we donated, we sang carols to the AWARE Shelter volunteers & employees.
NWEL & NWHS at JFH: Christmas Cheer
12/16/2014

NWEL&NWHS joined the ladies at Jackson Friendly Home for some Christmas caroling, cookie frosting, ornament making, and games to celebrate the holidays!
The NW students visited the homeless shelter to do art projects, have hot cocoa, and play games with the residents!
FUTP60 Greeters

Part of the FUTP60 program at Bennett included the students having leadership opportunities. At the Energizing Education Family Fun Nights the Student Captains passed out the Monthly Healthy Recipes as Student Greeters. This started in December 2014 and continued until May 2015.
MSP King Center Event
1/28/2015

Kristy Dillon, Parent Liaison at Middle School at Parkside, planned a Family Fun Night at the Martin Luther King, Jr Center! There were breakout sessions for teens with Most Teens Don’t (an anti-drug club on campus) and with teachers who were answering parent questions. There were also different agencies in attendance and games to play for families. Dinner was also served! I assisted Kristy by helping set up and by being the BINGO caller.
Hunt Elementary Food Drive for AWARE
Ended 2/9/2015

Julie Dawson headed up this drive at Hunt Elementary. All the classrooms were involved and the classroom that brought in the most non-perishable items was rewarded with a pizza party! They collected over 1,100 items!
MNA Yearly Initiative

Community Service Volunteer Fair

3/18/2015

At the beginning of your service year, you’ll probably start hearing about your Yearly Initiative. Early on, MNA will ask you to write up an idea for a project or event that is similar to what you’re doing as a VISTA (according to your VAD), but doesn’t quite fit in. The first Yearly Initiative I chose had to do with trying to get a recycling program/raising awareness about recycling in Jackson Public Schools. Unfortunately, that stalled out because of very low interest. So I switched and did the Community Service Volunteer Fair. I worked with Father Dan at Lumen Christi High School and planned the event to take place in March. There’s a document on the www.mnavista.org site that you’ll need to fill out. (And there’s one for when you finish your Yearly Initiative, as well.)

Fr. Dan’s interest was in giving the Lumen Christi and Jackson Catholic Middle School students an idea of what else was out in the Jackson Community, since they all tend to try and volunteer with the same couple of organizations over and over again. I invited every organization in the Jackson County area that I could reach out to. I sent out a 211 email to help get organizations involved. 211 is “is a free, confidential service that connects you with local community-based organizations across the state offering thousands of different programs and services for people seeking answers.” (www.mi211.org)

On the Google Drive are all the fliers I made to invite organizations, teachers, and students to attend. Recruiting teachers to attend was much harder than signing up organizations. I invited teachers from Jackson High School, Middle School at Parkside, and Northwest High School to join CSVF. I did not hear back from anyone at JHS and I only got Hoffbauer from NWHS. From Parkside, I was able to get more involvement because I was here AND was able to get PAVE (the parent organization) to pay for a bus to take the kids over to Lumen Christi for the event.

But both Jackson High School and Middle School at Parkside expressed interest in having their own CSVF events this upcoming school year! That could be a project that you bring up to JHS early on in your VISTA year.

Also on the Drive are the list of the organizations who attended and a few other documents that are pretty self explanatory.
Top Left: Save Our Youth, Inc (Thomas Burke) talks to students about his organization.

Top Right: Two Lumen Christi seniors stop for a quick pic!

Above: Jackson School of the Arts has their booth set up & ready to go!

Above Right: NWHS teacher Hoffbauer & student talk to Jackson YMCA

Right: MSP students sign in!
CSVF: Media Coverage

Service Fair
“For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
Mark 10:45

On Wednesday, March 18, in cooperation with the Jackson Chapter of AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America) Lumen Christi hosted a Service Fair. Various organizations from the Jackson area that use volunteers set up booths with information on what the volunteers do to help their organization and/or clients. Religion classes in grades seven through twelve visited the fair to learn of new opportunities for service work in our community. Northwest High School and Middle School at Parkside each brought students to attend the fair, as well. Approximately 300 students participated, visiting with the 22 organizations represented.

Meg McElhone of VISTA stated that her “goal was to give the students the opportunity to see who/what was available for volunteer work in and around Jackson. The majority of the students responded that they had found opportunities in the community that they weren’t even aware existed. The organizations were extremely pleased with the number of students they were able to reach out to and speak with as well. Overall, it was an extremely successful event.”

Left: This write up was in the Lumen Christi family newsletter.

Below: This article was in the Summer edition of the Success Standard (the quarterly newspaper that is sent to all schools and all families in the Jackson Public Schools).

We were also on the Citizen Patriots mLive:
www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2015/03/area_students_attend_community.html#incart_river
Global Youth Service Day

4/17/2015

GYSD was planned by Kathy Shafer and the Student Council at TA Wilson Academy. This year it was the MNA Signature Project, so we ended up working with MNA, our VISTA Leaders, and the two other VISTAs from MNA in Jackson. We also teamed up with Northwest Elementary School and Northwest High School. (Which was interesting because you don’t see a lot of projects that cross from one school district to another!)

We worked with around 470 people (volunteers, students, teachers, etc) for GYSD. We started the day at TA Wilson, doing clean up outside: picking up trash, raking leaves, pulling weeds, etc. We also planted some violas and pansies that I got from Beck’s Flower Shop and Gardens, Inc. They gave us a great discount of $10/flat. We bought 20 flats of flowers so we were able to plant flowers at each school AND had enough left over to give to NWEL as a Thank You.

We also had craft projects for the kids to do when we traveled to McCulloch Academy and Bennett Elementary. We had egg carton caterpillars (kids put in pipe cleaner antennae, fill the cups with dirt and plant small seeds) and peanut butter bird feeders (pine cones, string, peanut butter and birdseed). The kids got to take everything home with them, too.

The potting soil and the seeds came from Vandercook Lake Ace Hardware on Francis Street, the egg cartons we bought with the GYSD signature project money, pinecones were donated from VISTA Leader June LaVernway and Mandy Kennedy (who also donated peanut butter and birdseed), more peanut butter came from fellow VISTA Leslie Warren and I donated pipe cleaners & a dozen loaves of bread for birdfeeders (in case we ran out of pinecones—which we did).

It was a crazy day, but it was awesome.
mLive link:
www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2015/04/jackson_students_clean_up_give.html#incart_river
Builder’s Club: Toys for Cascade Humane Society
Middle School at Parkside
4/20/2015

Builder’s Club at MSP is a group of students who are trying to better their community through service work! This was a meeting where the students made toys to donate to the Cascades Humane Society, which they were later able to donate to the shelter on a visit there!
Jackson Earth Day in the Park
4/25/2015

Earth Day is another large scale event in Jackson. It’s planned by a committee of Jackson organizations that includes Jackson County Conservation District and the Jackson City Parks, as well as like twelve other organizations like the Audobon Society (which is concerned about birds in Michigan) and Fitness Council. It’s a really neat event and the people I got to work with were awesome.

I started out working with JCCD’s Kandice Karll, trying to figure out the recycling program/awareness Yearly Initiative, but when that fell apart, I started helping on Earth Day. It was a great way to meet a TON of Jackson non-profits and programs that I would not have otherwise. And a great number of people who were doing Earth Day attending the CSVF! So it all worked out.

The day of the event was freezing cold but really fun. There were about twenty different booths at Earth Day, ranging from a really cool reptile show all the way to Girl Scouts and back to canoeing in the ponds. There were Master Gardeners and tree saplings being given away AND Smokey the Bear was there, too. We also gave away a ton of recyclable bags and neat sunglasses... it was a fun day.

I also was able to get Danielle Shemanski a booth. She was a 6th grader at Parkside (who’ll now be a 7th grader there) who is trying to start up her own non-profit, trying to raise money to help people/families who need extra money while receiving cancer treatment. Danielle is a great lady and she was able to fundraise a little money on Earth Day!
**Left:** This is Danielle (in baseball hat) from Take Cancer Down and her sister, who was there to keep her company & help sell items to raise money for people/families receiving cancer treatment.

These are some of the booths that were at the Earth Day event.

**Left:** the Fitness Council’s Blender Bike is a huge fan favorite!
Kids Against Hunger
Bennett Elementary
5/8/2015

Kids Against Hunger is an organization from Detroit who helps schools and other groups package dry food to ship to devastated areas all over the world. KAH and the Jackson Kiwanis came to Bennett for the day and Bennett students were able to prepare 10,968 meals that benefitted the Jackson County area!
mLive link:
www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2015/06/bennett_elementary_students_pa.html#incart_river
Visited Mrs. Kennedy’s classroom where the students signed cards and drew quilt squares to donate to Operation Cuppa Joe.
This event happened almost on accident! Way back in April, the United Way emailed me to invite the MSP teachers to make tie blankets for the Inter-faith Shelter. I got such a response back that the United Way RAN OUT of blankets to make. So I offered to the other teachers the opportunity to do anything else with their classrooms. One of the teachers I was corresponding with, Jamie Woodring, asked if I knew of anything in the area having to do with World War 2, specifically the Holocaust. She is the German teacher but the English and History teachers were just completing their units on WW2 & Anne Frank and she thought it would be a good idea to have a speaker come in and talk to the kids about the Holocaust: what led up to it, what anti-Semitism is, and the fallout from the concentration camps.

Jamie suggested I research the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills, MI to see what they might have available. After a few phone calls, I had docent Mike Updike on the phone and we were scheduling a day for him to come and speak to the 8th graders at Parkside. He had a 45-minute presentation for the kids, including a Powerpoint. It was really interesting and the teachers and students seemed to really enjoy having Mr. Updike there.
NWEL at JFH: Last Event of the Year
5/26/2015

Kennedy’s classroom & another class from NWEL went to Jackson Friendly Home for their last service event of the year. The kids checked on the garden they’d planted in September & planted some new flowers for the Spring & Summer. Students also played games, painted fingernails, & encouraged residents to sign cards for Operation Cuppa Joe, as well as design some quilt squares. Definitely a good way to wrap up the year with them!
End of the Year at Bennett Elementary
5/29/2015 & 6/5/2015

For FUTP60 at the end of the year, Brant Russell (head of Food Services at JPS) brought in two of chefs to make all of our recipes from the year! The Student Captains had a blast taste testing everything!

At the end of the year assembly, I was able to pass out a TON of t-shirts, bags, Frisbees and footballs to students who received awards.

Right: Students who received the Principal’s Award.
You may be wondering what EXACTLY your job will be once summer break hits!

Good question.

When summer first hit, there was a flurry of activity... then SILENCE! It was really weird after being SO busy all year to suddenly have empty halls and no one around. There’s a few things you’ll have to wrap up—there’s paperwork, always. The grant we got at Bennett for FUTP60 needed some end of the year statistics, for example. There’s been some year-end paperwork for MNA as well. Then there were a few wrap up meetings with teachers, for reflecting on the year.

I also addressed the School Board with my end-of-the-school-year statistics and provided them with some of my favorite pictures from events over the year. (This is saved to the Google Drive, of course.)

I’ve kept myself busy working on this Legacy Binder and cleaning out my office. I’ve had some lunch meetings with organizations in Jackson to keep in touch and I’ve also had several phone meetings with the girl I’m mentoring for the Youth Leadership Camp.

I was invited to go to Ft Bragg, NC (an Army base) by Operation Cuppa Joe as a thank you for helping them out this year in August 2015, just before the end of my VISTA year. This opportunity is a very coveted chance to get a “behind the scenes” tour at a US Army base and gain understanding of what really happens to the recruits when they join the Army.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, however, is recruiting for both the LEAGUE Youth Leadership Camp and Fisher Training. YLC is for high school students to attend and learn about philanthropy and service learning and how to get themselves involved. Fisher Training is similar but meant specifically for teachers. YLC is usually in July. Fisher Training tends to be later in the summer. You will be attending both!
LEAGUE Youth Leadership Camp
7/22-26/2015

Every summer, the LEAGUE hosts a Youth Leadership Camp for philanthropy minded high school and early-college aged kids in Michigan! The whole event is youth-led and run. The LEAGUE VISTAs are there for support morally and physically. This year the theme is The Big Picture and focused on philanthropy that affects the world on a global scale.

These are the members of the Youth Leadership Committee!
FISHER Training  
8/12-14/2015

FISHER Training is a 3 day training for teachers/educators hosted by the LEAGUE and funded by the Fisher Organization. It is all about service learning and teaching the teachers how to utilize it in their own classrooms. The teachers will also receive a stipend of $175 to use in their classrooms on a service learning project they come up with.

Usually there is a session IN Jackson, but due to funding cuts we weren’t able to host one here. Teachers were clamoring for spots, and the sessions fill up quickly so I’d recommend talking to teachers BEFORE school lets out about Fisher Training and sending out the links from Nellie (all sign up is done online) ASAP. Here is a copy of the email I sent out to the teachers:

Hello, everyone!

I’m writing to you today because I wanted to let everyone know about the LEAGUE Fisher Training happening in AUGUST! Unfortunately, there will NOT be a Fisher Training taking place in Jackson this year. Don’t worry, however, there are three different opportunities for you to take advantage of!

  August 3-5      Detroit  
  August 10-12    Grand Rapids  
  August 12-14    Battle Creek

Fisher Training gives educators the opportunity to learn about service learning and how it benefits your classrooms and students! This training is a one-time opportunity that delves into ways to utilize the Learning to Give Curriculum and (BEST OF ALL) you will be able to write and receive a $175 project grant for your classroom!

Fisher Training is FREE and provides the opportunity to earn SECH or even college credit. This is a fun, skill building opportunity that I hope you’re able to take advantage of! Please take a look at your calendars and see which of these Fisher Trainings works best for you. As the time draws nearer, I’ll be sending out Registration information! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. Also, if you know any other educators who you think would be interested in participating, please feel free to pass on this information!

But in the meantime, have a great summer!

Meg McElhone
MNA LEAGUE VISTA
Jackson Public Schools
TO WRAP UP...

That’s about it from me, VISTA! I hope that I’ve been able to answer a lot of your questions and quell some of your fears. I know that there’s no way I’ve covered everything, but I think you have a really great understanding of what your year has in store for you!

Just so you know, I am available for consultation if you need it! I was fortunate enough to land a job here in Jackson, MI after my VISTA year concludes. I was addressing the Intermediate School District in the Spring, telling the Jackson County CI teachers about what I did as a VISTA (giving them the Powerpoint Presentation saved to the Google Drive) and after I was done, one of the women who works at the ISD pulled me aside and told me to call the non-profit Work Services, Inc. because they had the “perfect job” for me. Turns out she was right!

What I’m saying is that you can get in touch with me if you have questions, concerns, or just need to vent. I’m leaving you all my contact information. Please don’t hesitate to use it! I am also on Facebook and Twitter, if you’re on either.

I hope that you have a tremendously fun and rewarding VISTA year. I can’t wait to hear what you’re doing out in the community! Enjoy!

My Contact Information:
Meg McElhone
(517) 896-3318
meggymay_2000@yahoo.com