



# Green to Our Corps

Official newsletter of the Greenest Region Corps



## Greenest Region Corps



### GRC NEWS INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Veteran's Day,  
Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
& AmeriCorps Week  
Celebrations

GRC Training Day at  
MWRD & Plant Chicago

## Rooted in Service

As AmeriCorps members, we all have taken the following pledge:

***I will get things done for America-*** to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

*I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.*

*Faced with apathy, I will take action.*

*Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.*

*Faced with adversity, I will persevere.*

*I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond. I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.*

Embracing this commitment, our members set off each day to “**get sustainability done**” for not only America, but the entire planet. This newsletter issue explores how we root ourselves in service and how this spreads further than just our host communities.

## Service Days

One of the ways in which we participate in serving communities outside our host organizations is volunteering on public holidays. The Greenest Region Corps members celebrated Veterans Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day and AmeriCorps Week in a multitude of ways, being sure to honor and highlight these important legacies that paved a path of American service and leadership.



### VETERANS DAY

On Veterans Day, we volunteered at events throughout Chicago suburbs, lending our hands to host local government-sponsored presentations and breakfasts, offering words of appreciation and admiration for the attendees, some of whom were dressed in uniform for the occasion. We engaged in conversation with veterans and their family members, hearing the stories of their past described in vivid detail was captivating. Their accomplishments were celebrated with speeches, salutes and the singing of the national anthem and having our GRC members there to meet these heroes in person was a wonderful opportunity. Our GRCorps members Daniel Gonzalez and Cheryl Scott volunteered at the City of Highland Park Veterans Day Observance Ceremony. They helped with the event setup at the Highland Park Public Library, greeted attendees as they walked in, directed them to their seats, and answered any questions. As the event started, Daniel served as an usher to assist anyone walking in at the last minute and Cheryl took pictures for the City of Highland Park.

Approximately 35 veterans attended the event. "I know that the veterans truly enjoy what the City of Highland Park puts on every year," said Daniel, who was in his high school band and played at all of the Highland Park Veterans Day services.



Veterans salute as the Boy Scouts present the colors.



U.S. Representative Brad Schneider (at podium) and State Senator Julie Morrison spoke about their respect for veterans.



## VETERANS DAY CONTINUED

On November 11th, several GRCorps members attended the Lake County Veterans Day Parade & Ceremony Breakfast celebration in the City of Waukegan to support local veterans. GRCorps members helped with the event set up and clean up, served breakfast to veterans and their families, and listened to a ceremony presented by Lake County honoring all attendees. High school students representing the Great Lakes Naval Academy also volunteered with the GRCorps members and sang the national anthem during the ceremony. The celebration honored all veterans that are originally from or are currently living in Lake County. GRCorps members Ivy Klee and Katya Obrez recall the smiles across the audience as the high school students sang for the veterans. The admiration and respect was palpable as each veteran stood at the end of the anthem and saluted the young group of future leaders to carry on their tradition of serving America. In addition to these events, members assisted at Park Forest's Veteran's Day Celebration, pictured below. GRCorps member, Julia felt inspired by her experience at Park Forest stating:

*"I am happy to be serving and assisting those who have given so much for our country. Although not a member of the uniformed services, I feel united in our shared missions to serve the greater good and Get Things Done."*



Honored veterans at Lake County's Veterans Day Celebration



GRCorps members (left to right): Leslie, Haley, Robin, and Julia at Park Forest's celebration

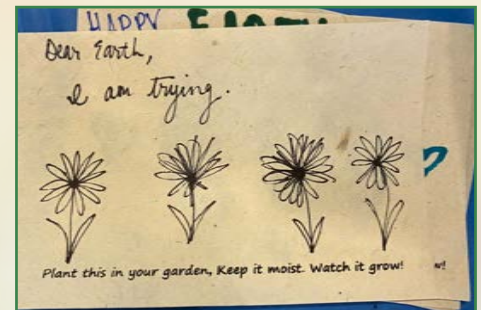


## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, seven of our GRCorps members volunteered at the 11th Annual Highland Park MLK Day of Service at the local Recreation Center. The multi-generational event is held every year to celebrate the life and the legacy of Dr. King. Everyone in the community was invited and around 30 local organizations were present, each one offering a purposeful service project for all attendees to participate in. The GRCorps volunteers hosted a seed-kit station, where kids and adults alike could plant a seed-kit with native seeds to be donated to Park Forest, one of our Corps's host communities, to increase the diversity of their native plant species on campus. Seed paper and markers were also available for everyone who visited our table to write a birthday card for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Our idea was that the seed paper could be planted, acting as a gift to the earth. The GRCorps also had a waste station set up at our table, complete with landfill, liquid, recycling and compost bins, to encourage all attending citizens to think before they throw and allow for a teaching opportunity concerning waste.



GRCorps members show our setup for MLK Jr. Day.



GRCorps invited all ages to write a note to Earth.



GRCorps members (left to right): Cheryl S., Julia, Haley, Daniel, Katya, Robin, and Ivy at Highland Park's celebration



## MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CONTINUED

On January 20th, five GRCorps members traveled to Robert Nathaniel Dett Elementary School and joined over 700 volunteers to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The morning began with inspirational messages from a host of dignitaries including Governor J.B Pritzker, Senator Tammy Duckworth, and even Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot. They lauded volunteers on their commitment to making MLK Day “a day on” and contributing to their local communities in whatever capacity they could. Volunteers painted walls, doors, and murals giving a facelift to some aging school infrastructure. Twenty-six projects were completed to spruce up Dett Elementary’s campus. After completing the service projects, volunteers had the opportunity to share in small groups about their experience participating in the day as well as the opportunity to identify structural inequality within different areas of Chicago. GRCorps member Brittanie enjoyed the experience immensely, sharing:



GRCorps member Leslie painting wall art.

*“I think it’s so important to give back to our cities. No matter how big or small the action is, collectively we can make an impact in our local community.”*



GRCorps members (left to right): Cheryl W., Charmaine, Brittanie, and Maya at Robert Nathaniel Dett Elementary School



## AmeriCorps Week

AmeriCorps Week, celebrated from March 8-14th, is a time to celebrate the contributions and support of thousands of local organizations that make AmeriCorps programs possible. This week provides an opportunity to recognize members and alumni for their service. Every year, 75,000 AmeriCorps members serve in more than 20,000 schools, nonprofits and community and faith-based organizations across the United States. This year is the 25th anniversary of the AmeriCorps program, which was first created in 1994 by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Throughout those 25 years more than 1.1 million Americans pledged to “get things done,” provided this country with 1.6 billion hours of service and earned \$4 billion in education scholarships to pay for college or pay back student loans. This week, the GRCorps host communities and members shared how AmeriCorps has impacted their communities and lives.



*Check out our Facebook page to see what our host communities and members had to say regarding their AmeriCorps experience!*

To further commemorate the significance of AmeriCorps and national service, Governor Pritzker of Illinois and several GRCorps host communities (**Park Forest, Oak Park, Hazel Crest, Hawthorn Woods, Highland Park, Northbrook**) declared March 8-14th, 2020 as AmeriCorps Week through official proclamations.



GRCorps member Cheryl W. posing with Village President Alsberry of Hazel Crest



# AmeriCorps Week Continued

## GOING GREEN MATTERS ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR

During AmeriCorps Week, the GRCorps volunteered at the 14th Annual Going Green Matters community fair in Wilmette, which included more than 100 exhibits to educate attendees on environmental actions they can take. Katie Friedman, GRCorps alumna and one of the program supervisors, volunteered at the Go Green Wilmette booth, which featured a mural of a tree. She assisted attendees in thinking of positive environmental actions they could take, which they wrote on cutouts of leaves, birds and acorns that Katie placed on the tree. Some of the intentions people wrote down included growing native plants, starting a compost heap, and eating more plant-based foods.



GRCorps member Haley Crim volunteered at a table on Go Green Wilmette's gas-powered leaf blower ban. She told attendees about the dangers of gas-powered leaf blower use, including hearing damage, pollution, and habitat destruction.

GRCorps alumna Dezirae Gonzalez wore a plastic bag monster costume for one of the shifts during the event. She helped to raise awareness about single-use plastics and how plastic bags cannot be recycled in municipal recycling bins; they must be recycled at local stores that participate in bag recycling programs. To find a nearby store that recycles plastic bags, [click here](#).



GRCorps member Haley teaching about leaf blowers

The plastic bag monster costume also resulted in attendee questions about municipal ordinances on plastic bags, such as plastic bag bans and taxes. Overall, the event was a success, in part because of the 140 volunteers who donated their time. Fourteen hundred people attended from 20 Chicago area communities.



Katie Friedman, GRCorps alumna and one of the program supervisors, poses with the plastic bag monster at the Going Green Matters community fair in Wilmette on March 8.



## GRCorps Training Day

A unique aspect of the GRCorps is the training it provides to members. Training days act as opportunities for members to dive deeper into different sectors of sustainability and connect with local experts to learn more about what is happening in our communities to create sustainable change.

In February, GRCorps participated in a training day focused on learning more about water reclamation and the circular economy within the Chicagoland region. We were fortunate to receive a tour of one of the largest water reclamation plants in the world: Stickney Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Chicago (MWRD). Here we learned the primary and secondary processes of wastewater treatment and MWRD's own sustainability efforts, such as reclaiming phosphorus or producing EQ BioSolids, a compost-like material, from by-product waste during the reclamation process.



The GRCorps also participated in a workshop with Plant Chicago, a local nonprofit with a mission to build, teach and revitalize urban communities. Our Corps explored the circular economy through the life cycle of a water bottle. We brainstormed the social and physical impacts that plastic generation, disposal, and potential reuse cause in a linear economy, and compared that with the circular economy model. Plant

Chicago pushed our members to imagine a world that considers not only the final product valuable, but commits to recognizing the impact and potential value of by-products and waste products, as well.

*Special thanks to MWRD and Plant Chicago for hosting our group and providing such insight and inspiration for our own sustainability work.*



**Metropolitan Water  
Reclamation District  
of Greater Chicago**



**PLANT  
CHICAGO**



# 8 REASONS TO GRCORPS

AmeriCorps Week March 8-14th, 2020



**12**  
members spread  
throughout  
Chicagoland


at least



**2**  
greenhouse gas  
inventories  
completed

Members support  
the GRC which  
serves

**6million**



**34,000**  
service hours  
committed  
by close of this cycle



**GRC2**


at least



**3**  
sustainability  
plans developed

joining

**1million**  
other AmeriCorps  
members since  
1994



**2018**



year our corps  
began



**1**  
chicken-keeping  
ordinance  
established



 Metropolitan  
Mayors  
*Caucus*



Click here for more information on how you  
can get involved with the GRCorps.



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