



A POINTS OF LIGHT ENTERPRISE

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20 FOR 20: AmeriCorps Alums Celebrates 20 Years of Alumni Success by Naming 20 National Leadership Award Winners

ATLANTA, September 2014 — To commemorate the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Alums – a Points of Light enterprise – today announced 20 winners of its National Leadership Awards, all of whom exemplify a commitment to a lifetime of service. The 20th anniversary celebrations honor the nearly 1 million AmeriCorps alumni represented by AmeriCorps Alums.

Building on their experiences as AmeriCorps members, these award winners continue to work to solve community problems in areas including economic development, state governance, educational opportunity, social entrepreneurship, food justice, health care, corporate social responsibility, global philanthropy, youth empowerment, veteran services, arts engagement, disaster services and international development. For a full list of award winners, see below or [click here](#).

“We are inspired by the wealth of talent our national awards competition revealed, proving that those who serve continue to make a difference at the highest levels of public, private, and nonprofit leadership,” said AmeriCorps Alums Co-Executive Directors Mary Bruce and Ben Duda. “AmeriCorps Alums are not just emerging leaders; they are already leading our communities at home and abroad.”

Chosen from a pool of nominees from all 50 states and across all 20 years of AmeriCorps’ history, the award winners will be honored in 20th anniversary events and will serve as spokespeople, advocates and resources for AmeriCorps Alums.

As part of the 20th anniversary celebrations, two upcoming national events are scheduled. On September 10, the Corporation for National and Community Service and its partners (AmeriCorps Alums, ServiceNation, and Voices for National Service) will host a reception honoring the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps alumni and national service supporters. Award winner Rebecca “BB” Lange will speak at the event to an audience including the CEO of CNCS, Wendy Spencer, and Representatives Doris Matsui and David Price, Co-Chairs of the House National Service Caucus. On September 12, [President Obama will participate](#) in a ceremony at the White House that AmeriCorps Alums Co-Executive Directors, Mary Bruce and Ben Duda will also attend.

The AmeriCorps Alums 20th Anniversary award winners are:

- **Alex Bryan**, Garden Project Program Manager at Greater Lansing Food Bank, Michigan (service began in 2005 and 2010 with CA Conservation Corps and Greater Lansing Food Bank respectively). Alex manages a program of 100+ community gardens connecting 7,000 people to food, and a program for lower-income and refugee individuals who want to start small farms.
- **Anuj Gupta**, Executive Director, Mt. Airy USA, Pennsylvania (service began in 1996 with City Year Boston). As the leader of a comprehensive non-profit community development corporation, Anuj establishes community partnerships and aligns resources—real estate development, commercial corridor revitalization and housing counseling—to strengthen one of Northwest Philadelphia’s most culturally diverse neighborhoods.
- **Brandon Cardet-Hernandez**, Principal at Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters and Co-Founder of Project Nathanael (service began in 2007 with New York City Teaching Fellows). Brandon shares, “Access to high quality educational opportunities is a civil rights issue. AmeriCorps and NYCTF helped provide me with a path to a life of service.”
- **Dr. Dayna Long**, Attending Physician at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland (service began in 1994 as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer with Project ABLE). As a result of witnessing the ramifications of poverty and trauma on children, Dayna founded and serves as medical co-director of the Family Information and Navigation Desk (FIND) to address the social and environmental factors affecting health.
- **George Dong**, Director of Operations at Teach For America Chicago and Founder of Education in Sight (service began in 2009 with Teach For America). George's passion for public service and education led him to found Education in Sight, a nonprofit aiming to give low-income communities access to quality eye-care services.
- **Deenie Espinoza**, Online Academic Advisor and Success Coach for The Learning House (service began in 1994 with the Pima Adult and Family Literacy Corps). Deenie began her chapter with Pima Family Literacy as a GED student, but later became their first AmeriCorps member. She has gone on to advocate for adult literacy and pursue her master’s in education.
- **Joyce Yamaato**, Vice President with Wells Fargo’s Strategic Philanthropy and Partnerships group (service began in 1995 with Literacy AmeriCorps in New Orleans). Joyce moved to the United States when she was 11 years old. Her AmeriCorps experience teaching English as a second language to adult immigrants and refugees influenced her philanthropic career spanning 20 years.
- **Kelly Tsai**, Spoken Word Poet / Filmmaker / Interdisciplinary Artist (service began in 2000 with Public Allies). Kelly seeks to create the emotional, visceral, and interpersonal connection between our different experiences in order to bridge the gap between disempowerment and empowerment. She has performed her spoken word poetry worldwide at over 600 venues.
- **Kevin C. Miller**, Strategic Partnership Associate with Swords to Plowshares (civilian service began in 2013 as an AmeriCorps VISTA with Swords to Plowshares). Kevin’s career in service began with multiple Iraq tours with the Marine Corps infantry. After struggling to transition to civilian life, he now ensures fellow veterans have access to the resources they need to succeed after the military.
- **Kyle Kimball**, President of the New York City Economic Development Corporation (service began in 1994 with AIDS Outreach). Kyle served in 1994 in Birmingham, Alabama, at a time when there was still a lot of mystery surrounding the disease. Today, he leads NYCEDC’s continued efforts to position New York City as the global center for innovation and to increase economic empowerment and mobility for all New Yorkers. Kyle says, “AmeriCorps was a critical training ground for me, making it possible for me to succeed in this work.”

- **Leroy “JR” LaPlante**, Cabinet Secretary of South Dakota Tribal Relations (service began in 2009 as a Legal fellow with South Dakota Access to Justice). JR’s AmeriCorps experience led to his appointment as South Dakota’s first Secretary of Tribal Relations where he endeavors to improve the historically maligned state/tribal relationship.
- **Lisa Raneë Tatum**, Senior Manager, Disaster Preparedness at the Volunteer Center of North Texas (service began in 1997 with AmeriCorps NCCC, Western Region Corps Member). Lisa has responded to natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and Super Storm Sandy, provided professional consulting and support to communities nationally, and has promoted service as a chapter leader for the AmeriCorps Alums of North Texas and a key member of the North Texas AmeriCorps Alliance.
- **Matthew Little**, First-Year Experience Director at University of North Alabama (service began in 1994 with City Year Boston). The son of teenage parents, Matthew spent most of his young life growing up in a trailer park with no way to fund college. His City Year service funded his college studies and launched his career in education and service.
- **Mona Mowafi**, Co-Founder & President, RISE Egypt (service began in 1999 as a Health Educator at the Latin American Youth Center, Washington, D.C.). RISE is an organization mobilizing the global Egyptian diaspora and its networks to invest in social entrepreneurship for development in Egypt. Mona says, “Through service (and as an extension, service learning) we gain a deeper understanding not only of the communities around us, but also of ourselves.”
- **Major Rebecca “BB” Lange**, Deputy Legislative Assistant at the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (service began in 1995 with the AmeriCorps NCCC Denver Campus). Rebecca’s civilian and military life is dedicated to service. She says, “It’s the pride in knowing your country needs you and has trained you to answer its call” that makes her glad to be an Air Force officer and AmeriCorps alumna. She also serves on the Leadership Council of the Washington, D.C. Chapter of AmeriCorps Alums.
- **Roger Wong**, Global Philanthropy Manager, Social Innovation at eBay Inc. (service began in 2003 as a Massachusetts Promise Fellow). After witnessing the death of a friend in the September 11 attacks, Roger was inspired him to serve in AmeriCorps. He credits his service with empowering him to overcome trauma and change the trajectory of his career.
- **Sondra Samuels**, President and CEO of Northside Achievement Zone, NAZ (service began in 1994 with the Justice Department’s Weed and Seed Initiative). Sondra lives and works in North Minneapolis, to bridge the gaps in a community where disparities abound and where families and children are isolated by race and income. She also served with the U.S. Peace Corps in Botswana, Africa.
- **Stefanie Mach**, District 10 Representative in the Arizona House of Representatives (service began in 2001 with AmeriCorps NCCC). In that year, she responded to a flood disaster with the American Red Cross, taught elementary school children, built hiking trails, helped construct five houses with Habitat for Humanity and maintained a wildlife preserve. After surviving a traumatic injury when she was young, Stefanie overcame challenges to serve in AmeriCorps and become a state legislator.
- **William Consuegra**, Economic Development Representative for the New Mexico State Land Office (service began in 1994 with Texas Youth Harvest as a high school senior). William has worked in business development at the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, facilitated international education and real estate opportunities for global organizations, led national service reviews with the Corporation for National and Community Service, and worked to build renewable energy and economic development projects in New Mexico.

- **Yamani Hernandez**, Executive Director of the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health (service began in 1997 with Public Allies Chicago). Believing all youth deserve to be safe, affirmed and healthy, Yamani has worked across disciplines for more than 15 years to amplify the rights and realities of young people.

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About AmeriCorps Alums

AmeriCorps Alums is a community of engaged citizens and civic leaders that gets things done for America. An enterprise of Points of Light, AmeriCorps Alums is the only national network that connects the nearly 1 million alumni of all AmeriCorps programs (including an estimated 80,000 new alumni each year) to the people, ideas and resources that support their commitment to a lifetime of service. AmeriCorps alumni are predominantly between the ages of 21 – 35, more racially diverse than the U.S. population, and over 60 percent female. For more information, please visit www.americorpsalums.org and connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Points of Light

Points of Light, the largest organization in the world dedicated to volunteer service, is home to AmeriCorps Alums. Points of Light mobilizes millions of people to take action that is changing the world. For more, visit PointsofLight.org.