

MINNESOTA

# Literacy

The COUNCIL

# VISTA VOICE



Spring 2015 | Your Connection to Literacy VISTAs Across the State!

## April “Life after VISTA” training recap:

The Literacy VISTA cohort recently had a day-long training in Minneapolis at the Center for Changing Lives. It was a great day packed with useful information and worktime. Debbie Cushman joined us for a presentation about landing a job after service, including advice for resume building and cover letter writing. We shared information about end-of-service VISTA benefits, peer-reviewed each others’ green books, and heard from a panel of Literacy VISTA alumni! We hope that you took a lot of useful information back to your sites, and look forward to seeing you all for the end-of-year celebration picnic at Wabun Picnic Area on June 25th!

***Missed the training? Find the training materials [here](#).***

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It's not too late to use these tools & resources from VISTA Campus

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Melissa Laubach & Adriana Gabres

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A completely unofficial 10-step Guide to Life after VISTA

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[mnliteracy.com/vista](#)

# VISTA *Spotlight*

Featuring: Lianna Sanders

“ I am currently serving at the University YMCA with the Y Mentors: Literacy Mentors program. This year I have been working a lot of program sustainability and helping the students take ownership of their program sites and curriculum. The second half of the year the students have been running the program on their own as a trial run before they are actually on their own. I am also creating a manual both on google drive and eventually in a binder to pass on to them. ”

*Lianna, tell us one fun activity for a VISTA-friendly budget:*

“ Como zoo! It's fun to go look at the animals, parking is free, and so is the conservatory. You can also walk around the lake, which is right there. The Como golf course isn't far either and it's relatively cheap. ”



*What is one of your earliest reading memories?*

“ It isn't my earliest reading memory, but what sticks out the most from my childhood is reading Harry Potter books. I would always get them as soon as they came out and wouldn't put them down until I was finished reading them. During one of the later books I remember my mom taking it away from me because I sat with it the whole day and didn't do anything else. ”



*What is your dream job?*

“ Since I was little I've wanted to be a professional horse trainer and have my own barn full of horses. ”



# Best of: VISTA Campus

VISTA WORKS | Hot Trends | Assessment Tools | Resume Builder | Job Search | Winning Interviews  
McDonald Remembers how McDonald's organized learning into digestible steps when we were children? VISTA Works captures the career exploration process in a similar way. It includes related links, tips and activities designed to help you successfully transition from VISTA service to work opportunities. The steps can be used individually or comprehensively to increase clarity & expand your career exploration process.  
... more  
VISTA Bulletin Board | VISTA WORKS Games | Welcome | Help | About Us

## VISTA Works Life as a VISTA > Life After VISTA

This is a great tool for any job hunter. Special favorites in this gizmo include the self-assessment and winning interviews exercise. The self assessment will help steer you in the right direction for your next career step. The winning interviews exercise will ask you tried and true interview questions, give you a chance to respond, and then tell you what key components make a great answer. If you have an interview coming up this tool is a great way to help prepare.



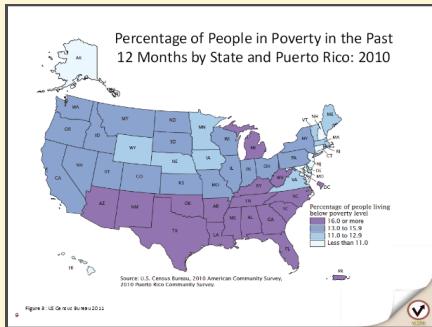
## Business World Travel Kit The Work > Building Partnerships

If you're considering partnering with a for-profit organization as a new fundraising method, the Business World Travel Kit is the tool for you. It offers excellent insight into understanding what businesses are looking for when considering this type of partnership. This tool will help you develop your "pitch" for the partnership and a more detailed proposal. Especially helpful is the checklist of "22 Questions to Build Win-Win Partnerships" which will help you find the perfect business ally for your non-profit.

BROWSE CATEGORIES | BROWSE INDEX  
MEDIA, BRANDING + VISIBILITY  
The best organizers know that a successful event requires media attention. Crafting the right message and strategically choosing who will cover your event is key to reaching who and how many you reach.  
The media can play a HUGO role in relaying and strengthening your message – so make it count! In this section you'll learn how to use online strategy guides to get media to your events, amplify your brand, and promote your cause.  
E-newsletters  
Photo Albums and Slideshows  
Your Website  
Social Networking Sites  
Podcasts  
Videos and Videos  
Google Grants  
Google Base  
Media Strategy Guides/Examples  
Blast Firing

## eOrganizer: eTools for Grassroots Organizing The Work > Working with the Media

This gizmo provides great ideas for how to promote your organization. A must read for any VISTA working with marketing or social media! Neat features include how-to guides for newsletters & podcasts, resources for conference calls and email blasts, and media strategy guides. Whether you're a novice looking for some guidance or an old hand looking for new ideas, the eTools for Grassroots Organizing is a fantastic resource.



## Conversations in Poverty with Dr. Stephen Pimpare The Work > Poverty in America

To be fair, all of Dr. Pimpare's webinars on VISTA campus are wonderful. Although this webinar isn't as flashy (pun intended) as one of the flash gizmos, Dr. Pimpare explains poverty in America in a way that is clear, concrete, and compelling. Conversations will help you understand poverty as it affects specific demographics and parts of the country, as well as some of the causes. If you are ever having a day where you wonder why you're fighting so hard to alleviate poverty in America, these webinars will remind you.

Briefcase for Success  
Tools and Resources for Financial Asset Development Initiatives | Welcome | Help | About Us  
Individual Home Ownership Programs | Microfinance | Entrepreneurship Training | Financial Literacy  
Individual Home Ownership Programs  
Individual home ownership programs provide assistance to low-income families in obtaining mortgages, home improvement loans, and refinancing in addition to education and training. These programs typically include credit counseling, consumer education, delinquency counseling, and referrals to lenders, realtors, and support agencies. See also Financial Literacy and Development Accounts (FDAs).  
Home ownership is an important mechanism to increase a family's wealth and prosperity as well as a means of stabilizing communities. In other words, it is the greatest method of wealth transfer between generations. In the U.S., there are lucrative tax benefits for home owners. Studies have correlated home ownership with greater stability in a family, even higher grades for children whose parents are home owners. Studies have shown that these factors contribute to the success of VISTA programs, increased participation, and building community capacity.

## Briefcase for Success The Work > VISTA Program Areas

For those who love numbers or those wanting to learn more about finances, Briefcase for Success will help explain several topics we don't often hear about it, such as microfinance, small business development, and individual development accounts just to name a few. This is valuable for the VISTA who is trying to implement a financial literacy course, or for the VISTA who is trying to provide more resources for their community.

# VISTA *Cross-Talk*

Melissa Laubach & Adriana Gabres

**A:** **Adriana: What has been your favorite thing about your AmeriCorps year so far?**

**M:** **Melissa: I think my favorite thing about being an AmeriCorps VISTA is helping support my site's youth programs and seeing the work that I'm doing make a positive impact in the community. Since beginning my year, I've developed a mentoring program for the youth in North Minneapolis and it's been enjoyable piloting the program. My AmeriCorps year has also allowed me to gain many skills that will be very useful in future jobs.**



**A:** **You said you have lived in Baltimore, MD for the past few years. How does it feel to be back with the MN weather?**

**M:** **After having lived in MN. and MD., there is definitely a difference in climates. Baltimore has milder winters; doesn't snow as much and isn't as cold. However, the springs/summers in Baltimore tend to be more hot and humid. In Minnesota, you can definitely feel the change in seasons. I am not really a winter person, but I do love the spring/summer/fall in Minnesota.**

**A:** **Has your past experience working in non-profits been an influence on how you are looking at your VISTA year?**

**M:** **During my past non-profit experiences, I learned I have to be creative when it comes to helping raise money for the programs. For example, in my past job, I asked local businesses if I could put a donation jar at their business to collect spare change. I feel this experience has allowed me to help raise funds for our youth programs. During my past working experience, I did much more direct service, whereas the VISTA year is more indirect service. I feel this has allowed me to see both side of service and how everyone in the organization needs to work together to achieve the organization's mission.**

**A:** **How will your job change as the school year ends and summer programming begins?**

**M:** **During the school year, I have been doing a lot of volunteer recruitment/orientations. In the summer programming there won't as many volunteers, so I probably won't be doing as much volunteer recruitment/orientations.**

**A:** **If you made a new ice cream flavor what would it be called?**

**M:** **Great question! Since I'm a huge chocolate fan, I would just name it chocolate blast and have a bunch of different chocolate in either vanilla or chocolate ice cream. I would probably use snickers, m & m's, twix, milky ways, and butterfingers.**

**M:** **Melissa: What has been your favorite thing about your AmeriCorps experience thus far?**

**A:** **I think best thing about my experience so far is how much I have learned. I grew up middle-class in Duluth, MN, went to a small private high school, then a private Catholic college in central Minnesota until last May, all very homogenous populations. So I knew that coming to an inner-city school from that background would be an eye opening experience. I did not realize how much. I have never been in this kind of learning environment or known people with this kind struggle in their home lives. I think so often we hear about the cycle of poverty and crime and the difficulties with school systems, but it is so much harder to understand until we are immersed in the middle of it and actually get to know people affected the most. I also met my boyfriend here, so that's cool too.**

**M:** **What are you favorite hobbies?**

**A:** **I like to cross-country ski, rock climb, kayak, hike, and most things outside. I also like to read. I recently joined a book club with some girls from college, which I am very excited about. I am also an enthusiastic watcher of Netflix. And Xfinity but only because I can watch Game of Thrones on demand.**

**M:** **What is the thing you're most looking forward to this summer?**

**A:** **I am a bridesmaid in my freshman year roommate's wedding at the end of July. She transferred back to her home town in Alaska after our sophomore year. I have only seen her twice since then so I am especially excited I was asked to be in the wedding. It is also in Alaska, so that's awesome.**

**M:** **What is the greatest thing you have learned from being at your site/working as a VISTA?**

**A:** **What I have learned about people and different situations is the greatest thing I have learned this year. However, I already said that above so another important thing I have learned is to not assume anything. On one of our college tours the students were asking the admission representative basic questions about the ACT. Myself, and the teacher accompanying us, realized that many of the students knew they had to take the ACT but had no idea what it actually was. I have to remember that I grew up in an environment where the idea was that of course everyone would go to college but that that is not the same idea here.**

# *The Unofficial* **Life afterVISTA** *Guide*

## **Step 1. Celebrate**

Congratulations, you did it!!! This definitely calls for a celebration, whether it's a night on the town, a dinner with friends, or buying yourself a present. You certainly earned it!!



## **Step 2. Relax**

Take a weekend or a week to decompress. This could mean reading and napping all day or chilling by a lake with friends. If you are in any position to go to Hawaii for the sole purpose of sitting on a beach and drinking from a coconut, that'll work too.

## **Step 3. Job/School/Next Adventure**

Using your super sweet skills that you learned in VISTA (numbchuck skills, ninja skills..) it's time to move to the next chapter. This might be a new job or school, or even full time job hunting. Remember, new beginnings and transitions can be a little terrifying, but that's normal. You're a VISTA, and you've already proven that have the skills and the strength to land on your feet.



## **Step 4. Ducks in a Row**

If you're like many VISTAs, there are several things you have put off until after your service term ends. This may include things like fixing your car, finally buying new socks, or saving some money in a ROTH account. Whatever good idea you've been putting off until after VISTA, do it as soon as you are able so it doesn't turn into chronic procrastination!



## **Step 5. Life of Service**

You joined VISTA because you're one of those awesome people who wants to make a difference. Volunteers make the world go round, and the world is still going to need you even after VISTA is over. Find an organization that is close to your heart and keep volunteering!

## Unofficial Life after VISTA Guide, Continued:

### Step 6. Follow your bliss/ Reach for the stars

Once you get your bearings in your new situation, it's important to keep chasing your bliss. "Do what makes you happy, and you'll never have to work a day in your whole life." Your passion may begin as just a hobby during your free time, but if you keep persisting you may find that your passion can also become your livelihood.

### Step 7. Let us know how you are!

We want to know how all of our Literacy VISTA alums are doing! Please feel free to drop us a line or give us a call. If you want to become involved as an alumni you could do things like help with trainings, or become a VISTA alum-mentor! Just connect to the Minnesota Literacy Council VISTA staff to find out more!



### Step 8. Connect to the national network

Did you know there are over 800,000 AmeriCorps alums? We are all lucky to be a part of a national network full of extraordinary individuals. The next time you are trying to get a project off the ground, or are looking for a job or maybe looking to hire someone, the alumni network can be a great place to start. Visit <http://www.americorpsalums.org/> to learn more.



### Step 9. Plan for the future/zombie apocalypse/retirement

For the vast majority of us, the living stipend has forced us to live pay check to pay check. Getting ahead and building a buffer is tough, but it's worth the hard work and strategic planning involved. Of course, people prepare in all different ways—some folks install solar panels on the garage for when the zombies inevitably knock out the power grid, and others diversify their investment portfolio. Do some research and start planning whichever way suits you best!

### Step 10. To Infinity....And Beyond!

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." -Eleanor Roosevelt



# Reminders & Save the Date:

- May 28 1-2pm | Job Search: Tips for Success**—Google Hangout w/ Ashley Sturz  
**June 5 | Monthly Reflections due** <http://www.tfaforms.com/373833>  
**June 25 2-4pm | Literacy VISTA end of service picnic** @ Wabun Picnic Area!  
**July 16 1-4pm | All MN VISTA combined grill-out** @ Como Park Picnic Pavilion  
**July 24 | End of Service Report & Survey due**

## Mystery VISTA:

### 1. What is your favorite part of being a VISTA?

Probably whenever I receive a positive response from the people my project serves, or when someone new expresses an interest in my project. It's truly gratifying to see your hard work come to fruition as something meaningful.

### 2. If you were given 24 hours to live, what would you do?

Oh boy, that's a tough question! Well first off, I'd reach out to all my family and friends— even some of my old buddies from elementary school— to talk to them one last time. But then I'd want the rest of my time to be full of celebration and travel. I'd spend the day riding motorcycles along the coast of Ireland (I was lucky enough to do that once and it was awesome!). I'd spend the evening feasting on delicious food and dancing with my friends in Paris. Then I'd spend the rest of the night wandering the streets of Rome and watching the sunrise over the Roman Forum.

### 3. When you were 6 (or so), what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be a fashion designer or a costume designer when I was 6. I loved watching period films—even as a kid—and had stacks and stacks of sketchbooks. I read fashion and bridal magazines the way some people read the newspaper. I even looked into going to a design school after I

graduated high school. But I'd had such a rigidly intellectual education all my life that I second-guessed myself... though now I'm starting to second-guess my decision to second-guess myself by not pursuing my passion!

### 4. What do you frequently dream about?

Hmm... Well, sometimes my dreams are about perfectly normal stuff, like getting coffee with friends, sometimes my dreams are pretty darn bizarre. Though for some reason, there's almost never a roof in my dreams—my dreams are always open to the sky.

### 5. If you were a smurf, what would your name be?

I had a friend in high school who always called me "Mishka." I feel like Mishka would be a good name for a smurf.



The **March Mystery VISTA**  
was Jon Kindschi

No one guessed correctly :(

Send your best guess to  
[akrill@mnliteracy.org](mailto:akrill@mnliteracy.org)

## Birthday Corner:

### Wishing a wonderful Birthday to...

**Maureen Harrington—4/4**  
**Erin Roberts—4/10**  
**Anna Michelson—4/20**

**Jamie Stepnjak—4/29**  
**Allison Scheider—5/1**