

The Literacy COUNCIL

VISTA VOICE



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

Welcome!

Welcome to the February Issue of the **VISTA Voice**. This month marks the **half-way point** for all of our August-start VISTA members. *Congratulations!* Keep reading to find VISTA advice and resources, highlights from MLK Day of Service, and so much more! Thank you to all who contributed.

-Amy

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Punxsutawney Phil on Groundhog Day, February 2, 2015
(Photo Credit: Jeff Swensen/Getty Images via "The Current")

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VISTA *Spotlight*



Ely
MN

Featuring: Eliza Kraker



I am Eliza and serve in Ely, Minnesota at the Ely Community Resource.

Our goal is to connect the community through activities and positive youth-adult relationships. I am working on a database organization of the participation in our programs and work closely with the Washington Elementary School.

I am currently finishing up a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) project with 4th and 5th grade students where we filmed good “paw pride” behavior (their mascot is the timberwolf) and edited it into a short movie. I am part of the PBIS team that implemented a course of expectations and actions for a positive school experience.

I also work with a tutor program that has 16 5th graders in reading comprehension and over 40 3rd through 5th grade students afterschool at Homework Club. So far, 4 volunteers have been recruited for our programs, including a college student, which was one of my goals!

VISTA

Spotlight

Continued

1. Eliza, what's your favorite part of being a VISTA?

My Favorite part of being a VISTA is any time spent with the students! I like hearing their jokes and stories. They always make me smile, even when I'm feeling down. I am interested in education and seeing how the learning process works. It can be a challenge some (most) of the time, but it's worth it.



2. What's your favorite tip for making the most out of being a VISTA?

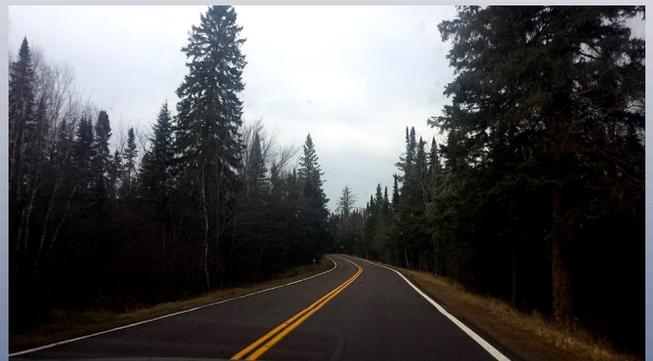
Being present and open to new experiences. You can't see if your mind is elsewhere. You can't know how good you are at something if you don't try.

3. What's your favorite thing to cook?

Since it's February my favorite thing to make is a big pot of chicken noodle soup. I just chop up carrots, celery, and onion, throw them in a few cups of broth, bring to a boil and then add the chicken and noodles or rice. It only takes about a half hour to prep and cook. It's warm, filling, and there will be lots of leftovers. You can even do it in the crockpot, or add dumplings instead (if you don't have pasta or rice, some flour and water and salt can be mixed together and formed into dumplings).

4. What's your earliest reading memory?

Instead of doing an advent calendar around Christmas time, my mom would read my two older brothers and I a Christmas book every night leading up to Christmas. We each got to take turns picking the book and my mom would read it to us. I think my favorite was one called The Christmas Postman because it had pop-up pages and letters you could take out and read. It's a nice, warm memory!



VISTA Living



Take time to **develop your personal and professional self** via ihearintelligence.com, a website featuring articles with these themes: self development, health, science & technology, environment, society, art, and DIY! **Some recent articles:** “Why do we procrastinate and how to stop it” and “13 reasons to read daily”

VISTA Wisdom:

“Take some time every month to look at all the work you've done so far, any materials you've collected for the GreenBook, delete or throw away unnecessary files, and re-organize. It can help you refocus and reprioritize (and rediscover old projects or good ideas that you haven't started yet).”

Enlighten your spirit with “cartoon quotes from inspirational folks” at zenpencils.com | Former corporate graphic designer turned freelancer, Gavin Aung Than, adapts quotes from “poets to presidents, comedians to colonels—anyone who inspires me, challenges my way of thinking, wakes me up or just makes me laugh.”

Jump right in at <http://zenpencils.com/newreaders/> or visit the [Facebook page!](#)



VISTA Wisdom:

“Remember self-care! You are enough. You have enough. You do enough.”

“[Remember] the importance of being self-aware. Having control of your emotions, your body language, and being conscious of how you are being received can make a big impact on the work that you do.”

Recommended Reads:

Blogs: www.chandoo.org (all things Excel)

[bethdillardpal-](http://bethdillardpaltrineri.wordpress.com)

trineri.wordpress.com

gettingattention.org Nancy

Schwartz

Books:

[Engaging in Social Partnerships](#)

Novella Zett Keith

[Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools](#) Pedro A. Noguera; Jean Yonemura Wing

[How Children Succeed](#) Paul Tough

[The Non-Profit Marketing Guide](#) Kivi Leroux Miller

[Teaching as Leadership: The Highly Effective](#)

[Teacher's Guide to Closing the Achievement Gap](#)

Teach for America; Steven Farr



VISTA

Cross-Talk

Karin Buchen & Kelsey Klug



Karin (Kit) Buchen (left), VISTA at Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was interviewed by fellow VISTA, Kelsey Klug:

Kelsey: What do you usually do to unwind at the end of the day?

Kit: It depends on how late I get home—if there's time I sit in the basement and work on my novel (read: haunt Pinterest), but if there isn't I cook something easy for dinner and watch *The X-Files* for the millionth time on Netflix. My roommate works late so we usually chat for a bit right before I go to bed—honestly, processing my day with her is what does the trick more than anything else.

KK: What's your favorite thing on the internet?

KB: My favorite thing on the internet is this video of a little girl trying to buckle herself into her car seat, and when her dad asks her if he can help she yells, "Worry about yourself!" That also happens to be the title of the video. Toddlers are some of the best people. Other than that, brainpickings.org has just a pile of awesome posts about creativity, psychology, famous artists and all kinds of interesting stuff.

KK: What has surprised you most about your VISTA service?

KB: I've been surprised by how I've been able to leverage my personal network for my site. I've got my church running a book drive for me, and I've got my high school to agree to be a Literacy Donation Site—basically their library will have a basket set out where people can donate their books to my program. I hon-

estly didn't know I had that in me until I heard Tig Notaro talking about her charity work and how she had a hard time asking people for things until she realized that she wasn't asking for herself, she was asking on behalf of others.

KK: Have you started to make plans for after this VISTA year? If so, what are they?

KB: You know, I haven't really been thinking about that yet. I'd like to do more writing, visit some friends. Job-wise I have no clue. Maybe my novel will sell and I'll become a famous rich lady and not have to worry about it? Maybe I should start thinking about this a little harder.

KK: Where is a place you've already visited that you'd like to travel to again?

KB: Denmark. I got to visit for a week when I was in college, and I remember watching the red tile roofs below us as the plane circled the airport for landing and thinking, well hey, so this is what home feels like. It was dark and snowy and wet the entire week I was there—it was also the week before Easter, and the flowers were already blooming, and the restaurants were all opening their patios for the first time all winter, and everybody was outside in short sleeves and bare legs as they biked around town. I spent half of my stay in Roskilde, home to the Roskilde Domkirke which is where all the Danish royalty are buried, and the other half in Copenhagen which is famous for the Little Mermaid statue. I also got to see Hamlet's castle Elsinor, AKA the castle Kronborg located in Helsingør. This was like seven years ago, I think. I would go back there in a heartbeat. Maybe that's what I'll do after VISTA!

VISTA Cross-Talk

Karin Buchen & Kelsey Klug



Kelsey Klug (left), VISTA at Northfield Middle School TORCH was interviewed by fellow VISTA, Kit Buchen.

Karin: What inspired you to become a MN Literacy Council VISTA?

Kelsey: Last year, I served as an AmeriCorps Promise Fellow in a position shared between my current organization (TORCH) and another site. The TORCH program serves middle school students, and I was surprised to discover how amazing middle schoolers are! I enjoyed that year so much that I decided to move into the second year of TORCH's VISTA position, which would allow me to develop more programming and put my ideas into practice.

KB: What do you do for creative release (knitting/crochet, painting, stand-up comedy)?

KK: I learned to knit last year and I've been exploring more stitches as I make gifts for various people. I also like to quilt, but that requires more equipment than knitting, so I don't get the chance to quilt as often anymore. With both knitting and quilting, I appreciate the opportunity to play around with color and texture in different patterns.

KB: What do you do to treat yourself after a particularly stressful day?

KK: I usually drink tea, or sometimes I'll go out and buy the ingredients to make myself a root beer float. I'm an introvert, so it helps for

me to curl up alone for a little while to recharge after a long day. Every night, I take some time to write, which is a way for me to release and reflect on my thoughts and emotions—I've been doing that for nearly 7 years now.

KB: What's your favorite genre for leisure time reading, and why? (Any examples?)

KK: Fiction is my go-to, though I'll read non-fiction from time to time when I get a recommendation from someone and I'm slowly moving into poetry. I like that I can explore so many perspectives and places through fiction, and there is so much good fiction out there! I'm usually partway through several novels at any one time, so I have a stack of books piled up next to my bed with the bookmarks all in different places. At the moment, that stack includes *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (Michael Chabon), *The Round House* (Louise Erdrich), *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Junot Diaz), and *A Wrinkle in Time* (Madeleine L'Engle).

KB: What did you want to be when you grew up when you were a kid vs. now?

KK: When I was a kid, I wanted to be a cartographer, an actor, a teacher, an architect, a doctor, a travel writer, and a whole lot of other things. I kept wanting to be a teacher for a long time, then I decided I didn't want to do that after all, but now I'm coming back around on teaching or another career in education.



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE | January 19, 2015

Service members across Minnesota took action to honor Dr. King's life and teachings by treating this federal holiday as a day *on*, instead of a day *off*.

Highlights:

via ICC of Minnesota

Over 200 AmeriCorps members volunteered across the state, specifically on projects addressing food access, education, and economic opportunity.

Approximately **750 volunteer hours** were served between Thursday, January 15th—Monday, January 19th.

AmeriCorps VISTA made up **24%** of all MLK Day service-related activities in Minnesota.

Literacy Council VISTA members:

Nina Nguyen volunteered with Campus Kitchen in Mankato packaging meals donated from restaurants in the community to provide to individuals in need of food. *(top picture)*

Michael Peters volunteered with his department by facilitating a group at a local food co-op who spent the day cleaning up their building and helping them organize after their recent move from one building to another in town. *(bottom picture)*

Melissa Laubach volunteered with VEAP, packaging food for their food pantry, which would feed 150 families.

Shelby DeWall attended the 20th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We Have a Dream Breakfast, held in Rochester, MN.



Reminders & Save the Date!

Thursday, February 19 | Movie & Discussion Night @ MN Literacy Council
6:30—8:30pm, Free - [Register](#)

Friday, February 20 | VISTA training @ Minnesota Literacy Council
Topics: Sustainability, Capacity Building, Green books

Thursday, February 26 | VISTA training @ Minnesota Literacy Council
Nonprofit Professionals Panel

Friday, March 6 | Metro Peer Group Meetings

Mystery VISTA



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

Connecting with other VISTAs through the Literacy Council and nationwide and feeling like I'm part of something larger than just my little corner of the world.

2. What happened during your '15 minutes of fame'?

In high school I once got a perfect score on the National Latin Exam.

3. What is your favorite zoo animal?

Jellyfish. They're mesmerizing to watch.

4. If you could have any superpower, what would it be, and why? An internal compass that's always right!

5. What is your birthday month?
January



The January Mystery VISTA was Jon Warling!
No one guessed correctly. :(

Send your best guess to akrill@mnliteracy.org for a chance to win a prize!

Birthday Corner

Wishing a wonderful Birthday to...
Ariana Yang → February 11th