

First Annual Volunteer Fair- Spearheaded by AmeriCorps VISTAs

Prepared by Molly Timmins, AmeriCorps VISTA Leader



On August 19th 2017, the AmeriCorps VISTAs with the Santa Fe Birth to Career Collaboration and the Mayor's Cabinet held the Opportunity Santa Fe Volunteer Fair at a local elementary school. The Volunteer Fair grew out of a need to recruit more volunteers for the organizations that one of the VISTAs has worked with over the past year. It grew to benefit all partners within the Santa Fe Birth to Career Collaboration. The VISTAs collaborated with the Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS), Girls Inc of Santa Fe, the Santa Fe Community Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sister Mountain Region, Communities in Schools of New Mexico, and Adelante. Through this collaboration, we were able to include representation of the organizations which would be served, and to *utilize local volunteer recruitment expertise*.



The VISTAs and the planning committee began meeting two months prior to the event. Meetings were held every other week in June; increasing to every week in July and August. The first two meetings included a lot of discussion, development of goals for the event, and suggestions for location and other details. The VISTAs played an important role during the process, as action items were created, they followed up on each one and reported back at the group meetings. Every VISTA had a role to play in moving the planning forward. Representation of other organizations was crucial for both coming up with suggestions and providing important contact information for locations, the media, potential donors, and other needs.

One VISTA, now the VISTA Leader, spearheaded this event, coordinating a team of VISTAs, the SFPS, and partner organizations. She distributed tasks throughout the planning process and during the event so that each VISTA was not doing too much and could balance their event duties with their typical VISTA responsibilities. In addition, she coordinated outreach to partner organizations, interfaced with representatives, and oversaw day-of logistics.

Another VISTA was in charge of outreach (i.e. creating flyers for donor requests and volunteer recruitment). She also drafted a script for a PSA and contributed to a press release the SFPS sent to local papers. It is very difficult to put a lot of information into a 30 second time slot on air!



A second VISTA hit the ground running soliciting donations from local businesses and interfaced with potential organization participants. These donations manifested as door prizes/raffles and food for the participants, an added benefit for attending the Volunteer Fair. Door prizes included gift certificates for food from Cleopatra's Café and Kakawa Chocolate House and annual membership to the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum and the Santa Fe Botanical Gardens. The Volunteer Fair was well stocked and prepared for a hungry crowd with food donated by Whoo's Donuts, Chocolate Maven, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Trader

Joe's and Albertons Market. Many thanks to the companies and organizations who supported this important Santa Fe event.

The outgoing VISTA and a VISTA who came to us right before the fair tag teamed on other tasks. One such task was an exit survey asking:

1. Did you find an opportunity that interest you? 33 people posted a dot for 'yes'.
2. Are you likely to follow up with the organization? 27 posted a dot for 'yes'.



GOALS

1. Recruit new volunteers for the participating organizations
2. Allow SFPS returning volunteers to fill out their paperwork and receive IDs
3. Hold the Volunteer Fair at no-cost, on a \$0 budget
4. Provide food as an incentive to participate and to thank our existing and new volunteers
5. Have door prizes/raffles as an incentive to participate
6. Increase the diversity volunteer pool by holding the event on the south side of town



OUTCOME

1. Roughly 100 community members came and there were 179 total sign-ups across organizations
2. About 20 new and returning volunteers filled out paperwork for SFPS
3. Monetary donations from two organizations paid for an advertising banner, decorations, and a Facebook boost to our event
4. Donations from 7 organization plus SFPS provided food and water bottles for the event
5. Donations from 3 businesses plus 3 participating organizations provided door prizes/raffles
6. The event was held at an elementary school that was easily accessible and on the south side of town



VISTA REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS/EVENT

- "It was a rush to coordinate so many moving parts for this event. When I saw it all come together, both smoothly and with energy, I was absolutely thrilled. I spoke to a few potential volunteers who found multiple volunteer opportunities. Being a Big Sister with Big Brothers Big Sisters made me even more happy to see all the connections being made!" -Molly Timmins, AmeriCorps VISTA Leader





- "The people I spoke with at the exit survey seemed happy about attending and interested in volunteering. I myself approached Literacy Volunteers and am meeting them on Friday September 1 to discuss teaching US Citizenship." -Adria Winfield, AmeriCorps VISTA



- "It was exciting to connect with so many people I knew from the community and who were retired teachers looking for opportunities to volunteer! I am also excited to be working with Literacy Volunteers of Santa Fe this coming year." -Louise Majorey, AmeriCorps VISTA

CHALLENGES/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT YEAR

- More organizations than we had capacity for wanted to participate, we will need a larger space next year
- Perhaps try a new location/school next year to assess best fit
- Push back the date so that flyers can be sent home with students through the SFPS to help recruitment
- Some people thought we were selling food, we need to clarify that food is free
- Include a set of instructions for volunteers at the Welcome Table, they were confused about the media releases and were trying to recruit volunteers for their own organization before they waked through the door
- We set two deadlines, a priority for our partners and a second for other organizations. Next year, start planning a month earlier to give more space and notice for non-partner organizations to participate
- We translated our flyer in Spanish and had a Spanish translator at the event but he was only utilized once. We need to figure out how to recruit more Spanish speaking volunteers (e.g. better flyer translation, advertise that we have a translator on hand)
- We allowed organization representatives to get raffle tickets and they ended up winning a majority of the prizes. Next year, we will only allow attendees to receive raffle tickets given that door prizes were an incentive for them to come.

