

Adrienne Strelcheck

AmeriCorps Alumni of the Year

Adrienne Strelcheck has been making a difference serving homeless and runaway youth in Wisconsin since 2007. She was motivated to serve these youth by her own personal experiences with housing instability and the challenges of transitioning to adulthood without the traditional supports of a safe and secure home life. She served as an AmeriCorps member for two years from 2007-2009 with the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services as a member of the Pathfinders Street Beat Outreach Team. She fell in love with the direct way they provide service to youth and help them to reach a safe and healthy adulthood. Pathfinders is Wisconsin's oldest service provider for runaway, throw away, and homeless youth, with Street Beat being Milwaukee's only youth-focused homeless street outreach program.

While serving as an AmeriCorps member, Adrienne identified the need for adequate clothing for the youth that she was serving with her team. She partnered with two of her fellow AmeriCorps members to help solve this problem by starting a youth clothing "store" called Pfitt in the agency's Drop In Center. Ten years later, the "store" is still going strong and Adrienne continues to work with current AmeriCorps members to make sure it is adequately stocked. Following the conclusion of her AmeriCorps service, she began working for Pathfinders with the Street Beat team as a Youth Street Outreach Specialist. Adrienne has continued her work with Pathfinders and has served as the Street Beat Outreach Program Coordinator for the past five years, serving as a mentor to new AmeriCorps members and helping them to develop the skills needed to become effective street outreach workers.

Adrienne believes that "AmeriCorps and Pathfinders helped me nurture the skills I developed in college, allowing me to take these skills out into the real world to fulfill my dream of doing meaningful and significant work with young people." This work is critical, as each day the Street Beat outreach team goes to sites throughout the city of Milwaukee where youth congregate, building trusting relationships with them. They provide safety gear and access to basic resources such as food, clothing, and hygiene products, as well as helping youth access jobs, emergency shelter, long term housing, reentry into school, and physical and mental health care. Adrienne believes "the essential component to this process is encouraging these young people to build trusting relationships with safe adults. Whatever they identify as a need, we help support them in meeting their goals. I have had the honor of helping literally hundreds of youth transition safely to adulthood."

