

Brian Blahnik

Marty Stein Friend of National Service Exemplary Supporter

For the past 19 years, Brian Blahnik has elevated the status of AmeriCorps and national service through his decisive leadership as an AmeriCorps Manager at Marshfield Clinic Health System.

While in college, Brian was a founding member of a military career exploration program for youth ages 2-21, the Wisconsin Army Cadets, where he still volunteers. After college, Brian, himself an Eagle Scout, worked with Boy Scouts of America as a Senior Exploring Executive, where he honed his skills in member recruitment, youth and mentorship training, and conference planning, all skills which would prove key to his impact through AmeriCorps. Brian then completed a tour of duty with the Wisconsin Army National Guard, developing innovative programming for substance abuse prevention and youth programming, which are themes carried forward into his national service career.

In 2000, Brian joined Marshfield Clinic's Community Outreach Department and successfully launched its first AmeriCorps program, Project Forward, which was both a youth development program and an alcohol and drug prevention program focused on providing community education around the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Brian's impact on national service has grown dramatically since then. Marshfield Clinic Health System now operates three programs: Afterschool, Recovery Corps, and Volunteer Wisconsin. This fall he will enroll Marshfield Clinic's 1,000th AmeriCorps member, demonstrating the scope and impact of these programs during his tenure. Brian has worked diligently the past 19 years to personally connect with each member, supporting them throughout their term and post-term.

Brian has also proven willing to help mobilize AmeriCorps members during natural disasters. This was demonstrated in 2017, when in a matter of hours, Brian mobilized a response team consisting of 18 AmeriCorps members to a flooding disaster in northern Wisconsin impacting the Bad River Tribe in the Ashland County community of Odanah. This winter, Brian asked Marshfield Clinic members to provide immediate support to their communities' unique needs arising from the polar vortex.

Brian's commitment to national service is recognized by his fellow AmeriCorps program directors from throughout the state. His peers affectionately refer to him as "Captain AmeriCorps" because he embodies and lives the spirit of AmeriCorps in all that he does to support members, develop innovative programming, facilitate crisis response, and be a voice for directors statewide. He is seen as a "go to" person for fellow directors, serving as historian, keeper of AmeriCorps knowledge, and as a trustworthy advisor who listens and helps find a viable solution. They believe he keeps a watchful eye on AmeriCorps happenings nationally and consistently steps up to support and grow new initiatives. They also see him as an experienced advocate for AmeriCorps, a role model, and as a professional mentor, stating that his continuous efforts and overall impact are monumental and worthy of deep respect and appreciation.

