

AmeriCorps 25th Anniversary

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I was fortunate enough to attend the 25th anniversary of AmeriCorps at the Milwaukee County Zoo. AmeriCorps is a service-based organization that helps the needs of communities throughout the nation. People of all ages from many different backgrounds make up AmeriCorps, which is empowering because everyone has different strengths to bring to this network of programs. AmeriCorps has existed for the past 25 years, strengthening communities and making them safer around the country. It helps families obtain affordable homes, mentors students, helps communities recover from natural disasters, supports veterans, helps with conservation efforts, and so much more. When people choose to join AmeriCorps, they serve anywhere from three months to one year depending on their program. I am currently serving ten months with the Racine Zoo's program. I serve the community of Racine County by educating students about different kinds of animals and conservation issues through the Racine Zoo. The students are in kindergarten, third, fourth, seventh, and ninth grade and they learn about animal classifications, animal habitats and

adaptations, bird identification and how to go birding, what the Great Lakes are and the conservation issues they are facing, and what research is and how to conduct their own research projects. Being a part of AmeriCorps is such a rewarding experience, and it was so fulfilling to be surrounded by so many others who are dedicated to serving in their communities as well.

This event was a great team bonding experience for all of the members in our program. After all of the presentations, there were AmeriGames that we all participated in. We won AmeriCorps merchandise and apparel items and shared a lot of laughs in the process. Following the AmeriGames, we were given free rein to tour the Milwaukee County Zoo. We entered the primate house and saw their orangutans. There was a zoo educator talking to people about the orangutans and we found out she used to be associated with the Racine Zoo! It was really awesome to instantly connect with a complete stranger in this way. Since our program is full of animal educators, we all were talking to each other about how impressive all the animal exhibits are. I was especially impressed with the new elephant exhibit! Overall, it was an amazing day that I got to spend with the other AmeriCorps members and I am excited to keep serving Racine County through the Racine Zoo.

