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Serve Alaska: AmeriCorps Portfolio Manager, West Region, Visits Alaska

Ather Ahmed conducts site visits in Alaska

Wednesday, July 12th, 2023 (Anchorage, AK)—AmeriCorps Portfolio Manager for the West Region, Ather Ahmed, traveled to Alaska in June to connect with Serve Alaska AmeriCorps members across the state. The purpose of the visit was to meet with Program Directors, tour AmeriCorps operations service sites, and connect with Serve Alaska’s leadership and AmeriCorps subgrantees’ staff.

“It’s an honor to join our partners in Alaska side-by-side and to bear witness to the transformation occurring through the power of service and civic engagement. In Alaska, there are over 150 service sites, 450 AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers and AmeriCorps members, \$5.8 million in AmeriCorps and local funding, and \$13.2 million in AmeriCorps scholarships earned. This collective impact is worth celebrating,” said **Ather Ahmed, AmeriCorps Portfolio Manager, West Region**. “I like to highlight the work that has been done by reminding myself that every AmeriCorps story starts with an individual, like you and me. The reasons we come to service are as diverse as we are individuals. I, and the West Region Office of Regional Operations, are grateful to Serve AK for the diligent administration of federal and state resources to provide the opportunity to serve all Alaskans.”

During his visit, he met with leadership and staff at the Alaska Children’s Trust (ACT), Student Conservation Association (SCA) and the Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) to:

- Discuss vision and alignment of goals
- Identify potential partnerships
- Evaluate impact and status of AmeriCorps grants
- Gain insight on recruitment practices
- Understand the member lifecycle
- Discuss service locations and placement
- Provide technical assistance to AmeriCorps programs

Mr. Ahmed engaged with AmeriCorps members on the ground and virtually to discuss serving urban and rural communities in Alaska. These meetings were important for Mr. Ahmed to see first-hand how the programs in organizations like the ACT, Boys and Girls Club, Sitka School District, Alaska Public Defender’s Office, Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP), and United Way of Southeast Alaska have direct positive impacts to their communities. Mr. Ahmed was also able to spend a full day serving side by side with AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps Alaska members during RurAL CAP’s Earth Day of Service at Stickleback farm and capped his visit with RurAL CAP’s Elder Mentors Luncheon.

“These AmeriCorps grants prioritize how important it is to give local organizations the tools to run national service programs and bring much-needed support and training to rural and urban Alaska,” said **Sandra Moller, DCRA Director**. “This investment, to address locally identified needs in education, homeland security, environmental, public safety and other human needs of Alaska residents, further strengthens partnerships with a thriving network of local, state and national organizations.”

AmeriCorps research shows that volunteers engage with their communities at higher rates than non-volunteers. They talk to neighbors more frequently, participate in civic organizations, attend public meetings, discuss local issues with family and friends, do favors for neighbors, and vote in local elections. Volunteers donate to charity at twice the rate of non-volunteers. This is why Serve Alaska at DCRA continues to seek and administer AmeriCorps grants as they align with our identified six focus areas: disaster relief, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, veterans, and families.

Serve Alaska promotes and supports volunteerism across the state and brings AmeriCorps programs to Alaska. It is overseen by no fewer than 15 and no more than 25 voting Commission members appointed by the Governor. The Serve Alaska sub-grantees operate in almost every region of the state, bringing much-needed support and training to rural and urban Alaska. Serve Alaska is housed within the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Division of Community and Regional Affairs.

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteerism and national service, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation’s most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency invests more than \$800 million in grants for local nonprofit, community, tribal, and state organizations; places more than 250,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles; and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers. Learn more at AmeriCorps.gov.

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