



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

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Kentuckians Pledge to Get Things Done through AmeriCorps

325 new and returning members begin service year

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 25, 2018) – Today, more than 325 first- and second-year AmeriCorps members took a pledge to “get things done” in Kentucky as they embark on a year of service to their fellow Kentuckians. The kickoff ceremony was held at the state Capitol in Frankfort.

AmeriCorps is a national service program administered by the bipartisan, governor-appointed, Serve Kentucky (formerly the Kentucky Commission on Community Volunteerism and Service), which is part of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) and the federal Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps members serve nonprofit and faith-based organizations with critical educational, environmental and safety needs. Kentucky organizations receiving grants are dedicated to efforts such as providing drug resistance education, teaching and tutoring children, combatting homelessness, empowering victims of domestic violence, promoting post-secondary opportunities, offering financial literacy resources and assisting low-income elderly residents.

Serve Kentucky Executive Director Joe Bringardner said one of the reasons AmeriCorps is so successful is that it expands educational and economic opportunity – for both the individuals served and the AmeriCorps member.

“Serving can mean the difference between getting a degree and becoming a local leader, and never completing college,” he said. “AmeriCorps’ educational funding and workforce development opportunities have made just as much of a difference on Kentucky communities as its programming.”

AmeriCorps members serve in one of 20 AmeriCorps state programs in more than 380 unique service sites across the commonwealth, where they will help address unmet local human service needs. More than 900 members total will serve this program year.

CHFS Secretary Adam Meier said the members are up for the challenge.

“You will learn new skills and be exposed to new experiences that will prepare you for a lifetime of leadership,” he said. “But you will also become more sensitive to the needs of others. You will become a friend, a listener, a cheerleader, a coach, a problem solver, a confidante, a taskmaster, and a lifeline to the men, women and children you serve.”

Kentucky Department of Public Health Commissioner and AmeriCorps alumnus Dr. Jeffrey Howard spoke to the members at the kickoff event about the impact service had on his life and career.

“AmeriCorps gave me the opportunity for experiences and relationships that helped shape my path toward public health services and administration,” Dr. Howard said. “Through their service, AmeriCorps members can clearly see the needs of a community and get the chance to fill those needs. Being a part of the Kentucky Department for Public Health is the next step in my service, and I’m so glad AmeriCorps taught me -- as members of this year’s pledge class will learn -- that a commitment to serve can come in many forms.”

Serve Kentucky partnered with Public Health to provide training for all event attendees on naloxone, which included providing free kits containing the overdose-reversing medication.

Bringardner also said that AmeriCorps is a cost-effective solution to some of Kentucky’s toughest challenges.

“AmeriCorps members make remarkable contributions to Kentucky,” he said. “For more than two decades, they have helped elderly people remain in their homes, trained others to respond in the event of emergencies, helped at-risk students catch up academically and, perhaps most valuable of all, they offer a listening ear and a strong desire to help. It is inspiring to others seeking a way to serve.”

Bringardner said that in addition to performing community service tasks, members also recruit local volunteers to help ensure programs and progress continue after members complete their terms of service.

“Members really do leave a lasting impact,” concluded Bringardner. “They work through local partnerships to expand services and develop sustainable community programs. AmeriCorps members do more than just fulfill a service assignment; they make communities stronger and better prepared for the future.”

Since 1994, more than 12,000 Kentuckians have served approximately 19 million hours and have qualified for Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards totaling more than \$44.3 million. Nationally, more than one million men and women have served in AmeriCorps, providing more than 1.4 billion service hours.

AmeriCorps provides service opportunities to members on a full-time (1,700 hours of service per year) or on a less than full-time basis. Members ranging in age from 18 to 80 have signed on for a year of service to their communities and received training to equip them to fulfill their service assignments. Recruitment is still ongoing and part-time positions are available throughout the year.

More information about AmeriCorps or Serve Kentucky is available at chfs.ky.gov.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.