

Graduates offer time and talent



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This is a perfect time for AmeriCorps and VISTA members to renew their commitment to service. As a two year AmeriCorps/VISTA member, I am encouraged by President Obama's emphasis on service and engagement in one's community.

In Rochester, there are several AmeriCorps-funded projects, including the Rochester Youth Year Fellowship Program that I currently coordinate. The

Rochester Youth Year VISTA members, and all AmeriCorps/VISTA members, devote a year of full-time service to work with non-profit organizations whose missions focus on ending poverty.

I am honored to serve alongside the five Rochester Youth Year VISTAs working in the community this year. They are recent graduates of local colleges who have chosen to offer their skills, knowledge and passion to make the city of Rochester a better place.

I have met some of the most wonderful and interesting people while helping to clean up the Marketview Heights neigh-

borhood, teaching youth about nonviolence at the George Eastman House and helping to sort donations at Foodlink. Service has taught me to step outside myself, to shed preconceived notions and to search for common ground.

You won't always see the fruits of your labor and not everyone will appreciate your efforts to improve the community. But through service, in its diverse manifestations, we build a foundation for the future. Through service, we have the opportunity to align our actions with our values.

The Rochester Youth Year VISTAs plan on stay-

ing in Rochester and continuing the work they've begun this year. That is not only a testament to their drive and commitment. It is an attestation that there are young people who truly believe in the potential of the Rochester community to overcome significant challenges. Please help to celebrate their service by joining them in their efforts to strengthen the Rochester community. □

Bower is program coordinator of the Rochester Youth Year Fellowship, which is administered by the Rochester Regional Network, a consortium of six local colleges.