

Raymond McClain

AmeriCorps Member

Bedichek Middle School - AISD

Why did you join AmeriCorps?

I have an innate desire to help people. Growing up I was often told I needed to leave things in better shape than when I found them. That principle has stuck with me and I apply it not only to things, but to people as well.

My goal with every interaction with people is to help more than I hurt, to “leave them better than when I found them,” so to speak. It is a rewarding lifestyle which, ironically enough, leaves me in a better place than when I find people (or they find me).

For this reason, I wanted to serve in a place that could (a) maximize my opportunities to better help people; and (b) meet the goals I had. I could not really see myself working in sales or retail—though these professions are noble in their own right. They just did not fit the goals I had established for myself.

When I found out about AmeriCorps I realized how perfect this organization could be for me. I could have easily been someone in the CIS program as a kid, so it resonated with me on a personal level.

I serve in AmeriCorps because it is a life-changing organization, not only for the students we serve, but for me as well. Despite some personal tragedies, this has been one of the very best years of my life.

What would you say to someone who is interested in joining but not sure?

I would tell an interested person that serving in AmeriCorps can be a difficult commitment . . . but very rewarding. The kids we interact with are no angels, and can be a bit . . . *challenging* at times. The hours required may seem daunting and the living allowance may not be all that appealing for some, but I can assure them it is so worth it.



My fellow AmeriCorps members are all loving and caring people who not only want to help those in their caseloads—but each other, too. From members and interns, to the Director, and the CEO of CIS, everyone has been absolutely amazing. You won't be some faceless person to them, but someone they truly care about.

The most rewarding part, though, is seeing the changes in the students we interact with. Some students have behavioral problems and do not get much positive attention in their lives. We get to show them they have someone in their corner, someone who is rooting for them and believes in their potential and will do everything they can to help them reach it. Progress will not be instantaneous nor will they all become academic scholars. But we celebrate every success no matter the size—because it is a win for them! Seeing them becoming believers in themselves is an amazing experience.

It is worth any challenges you may face. I cannot recommend serving in AmeriCorps strongly enough!