



Featured Story:
VISTA Blogs - I Only Have
to Raise A Million Dollars



Profile: Phyllis Meade Burkemper
Boomerang Comes Back For More - Returning to
Serve Years Later

VISTA Viewfinder
Issue 1: May 1, 2008

VISTA: Volunteers In Service To America
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VISTA viewfinder



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ISSUE 1: May 1, 2008

VISTA Shares Through Blogging: Balancing Act: Managing Your Workplan and Time as a VISTA

How do you share your stories of VISTA with the world? A few VISTAs started blogs dedicated to their stories of service. Bethany Warner, a VISTA at the Starfish Initiative in Indianapolis, blogs regularly about VISTA.



Initiating change: Starfish VISTAs (from left to right) Nora Stewart, Deandra Thompson, Bethany Warner and Lauren Hunter

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To read more about Bethany's VISTA adventures, visit her blog at <http://starfishvista.blogspot.com/>. Here is an excerpt from one entry:

"I only have to raise a million dollars.

This phrase has become a punch-line of sorts here at the Starfish Initiative in Indianapolis where I am serving my VISTA year. When other people start expressing their frustrations or why I have the "easy" job as the fundraiser/grant-writer, the retort that comes up is "I only have to raise a million dollars."

I've been a VISTA for four months and so far, I've directly raised \$63,500 from grants I've written. Only \$906,500 to go and the clock's ticking.

I can hardly believe that one-third of my time as a VISTA is over. The cynical voice in my head says, "Can't raise that million dollars? Well, you're single-handedly dooming more high school kids to be dropout statistics and be stuck in poverty." All because I can't get a few more foundations to send us checks.

I know – I tell myself all the time that the work I am doing is helping. There are students whose lives are being changed because the money I have raised, that the rest of the full-time staff can concentrate on their primary jobs because I'm working to raise the money that lets me them do what they love, what they are good at.

Eight months left. I only have to raise a million dollars.,

Bethany K. Warner
VISTA
Starfish Initiative
Indianapolis

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VISTA Boomerang: Returning to VISTA After 40 Years

Phyllis Meade Burkemper, a third-term VISTA working with the English as a Second Language program at Cristo Rey in Erlanger, KY., is a "VISTA Boomerang"—someone after serving in the 60s or 70s who has returned to VISTA.



For Phyllis Burkemper, a smile is the universal language when working with English as a Second Language students.

In January of 1967, Phyllis was 18 and starting VISTA service at Centro Cristiano de la Comunidad in South Bend, Ind. Her assignment was to help the migrant community find steady employment, adequate housing and other basic needs. She also worked to raise awareness of the migrant camps in the wider community.

"I wanted to get out into the world and do something much different and learn things and participate," she said. "My first day there, we went to a funeral for an infant who died from exposure from the cold because the housing was so inadequate. I thought, 'If this is what it's going to be, I'm not sure I want to be here.'"

However, Phyllis recalled that her year was *"more than she could ask for."* After VISTA, she worked at the University of Maryland, lived in Japan and later moved to Kentucky, where she rediscovered VISTA at an AmeriCorps career fair booth. She signed up for a second year of VISTA, which she completed in August. This is in her third term.

Her duties include recruiting and training ESL volunteers, creating an incentive program for students, coordinating special projects and events for the program, and initiating community partnerships.

"My favorite part about being a VISTA is the diversity of the job," she said. *"I work with lots of people in a variety of service situations. Being able to share my time and talents with anyone who needs me to help is what I am here for."*

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Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is the Viewfinder?

A: VISTA means view-looking out on a broad expanse. The viewfinder, a toy that all generations of VISTAs

recognize, was a kind of binocular that focused on points of interest, highlights, and snapshots in living color. The VISTA Viewfinder surveys in the landscape and zeroes in on service. Welcome to the first issue.

Q. Why the Viewfinder?

A. Here's your direct link to connecting with other VISTAs, learning what they are doing, and helping to spread the message of VISTA and national service!

Q. How can I contribute?

A. Have a story to tell? Submission ideas? Contact vistaoutreach@cns.gov. Use the Viewfinder to highlight your VISTA service and share your experiences with others across the country!

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