



**An exercise:
Beyond Your Year**



Aurora Borealis
As we celebrate Memorial Day, a VISTA writes about her project helping veterans.

VISTA Viewfinder
Issue 3: May 27, 2008

VISTA: Volunteers In Service To America
Since 1964, 175,000 Strong



VISTA
viewfinder



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SNAPSHOTS

New Orleans VISTA site, Rebuilding Together, was featured on Home and Garden TV:
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VISTA alumnus wins Civic Venture's "Purpose Prize":
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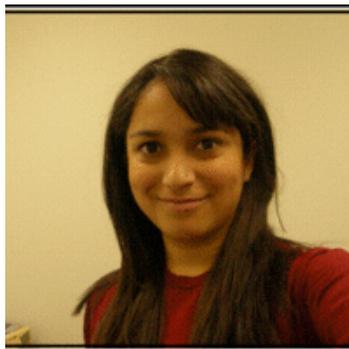
Learn about the CTC (Community Technology Centers) VISTA program:
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ISSUE 3: May 27, 2008

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As we celebrate Memorial Day, a VISTA writes about her project helping veterans.

By Katie Perez, VISTA in Anchorage, AK



Veterans Industries is a segment of the Veterans Administration. The facility where I work is attached to a recovery and treatment center that houses veterans with substance use disorders and/or Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. Many of these veterans also have other mental health issues, and most of these men and women are homeless.

The veterans have the option of coming into our

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FAQ

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Compensated Work Therapy program, and to stay in Transitional Housing. While in the program, the veterans continue to receive treatment for their addiction and mental health issues on an outpatient basis, while receiving job counseling, debt counseling, recreation counseling, and more. The goal of the program is to ease these men and women back into independent, community-based living, and into the competitive workforce. We achieve this by developing partnerships with other businesses and organizations where our veterans can undergo trial work periods. My role with VI is to expand the number of partnerships with these businesses and organizations.

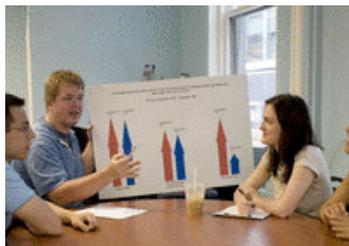
I chose this project because the war and the issues surrounding it are at the forefront of the nation's conscience, and my own as well. I wanted to add an element to my work that would allow me to have observable, positive results on the people around me. I am concerned about the men and women who were negatively affected by the war and who are not receiving help, and for anyone who undergoes trauma and lacks the ability to cope.

I think that there is so much going on here that is positive... so much unrecognized goodness being delivered. I'm surrounded with new role models and people who inspire me to be a better person. My job is easy because of these people and their accomplishments—I just have to get the word out. People will want to be a part of what is going on here, and once the community becomes more involved, Anchorage's VI will be permanently successful.

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An Exercise: Beyond Your Year

Take five minutes today and think about how your VISTA project will look after you and any VISTA who might serve after you are gone. Will you see the project as thriving, or will it have collapsed?



Ben Stoltenberg, the State Program Specialist in the Maryland/Delaware Office and a former VISTA himself says, *"A VISTA's job is to work themselves out of a job. Their service needs to go beyond their individual contributions and their project must become sustainable in the community and organization long after the VISTA resource has disappeared."*

So how do you do this? It starts with a reality check.

Realize that your time on the project is limited. Make sure the activities you are engaged in are focused on long term

success for the project and that this is reflected in your work plan. Keep a work diary and at the end of each week identify where your energies were directed. If they do not align with the long term goals of the project, then meet with your supervisor to redefine your work activities to better support these goals. Also, put a list of these goals in a place you'll see every day, like next to your computer, to help remind you of what is at the heart of your service.

Realize you are not alone. Other VISTAs are focused on this goal as well. Talk with each other, your host site and your state offices. Visit the resource center at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/> and review your binder of training materials from PSO.

Realize that it can be done. Countless successful projects started with VISTAs just like you visualizing their project's future. Follow their lead. Success beyond your year begins with five minutes.

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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.

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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