

# The AmeriCorps Times

O P E N D O O R F A M I L Y M E D I C A L C E N T E R S



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On July 9, we celebrated the 2012-2013 AmeriCorps graduation. The graduation is the culmination of eleven intensive months of service. It is quite astounding what a group of motivated individuals can accomplish in this short amount of time. The AmeriCorps team engaged more than 150 community volunteers to support our Reach Out and Read Program, enrolled 415 patients in new insurance and health program, and provided health education to over 16,000 individuals. This includes nutrition, fitness classes, diabetes and asthma management, fitness classes, anti-bullying seminars, life skills, and much more. It has been Open Door’s tradition for many years that each graduating member share what the experience had taught them. This year, many talked about how they appreciated being able to provide direct services to the community, and others talked about acquiring new skills and professional experience, but I think everyone mentioned the new friendships that were created during their service term. One of the wonderful aspects of our programs is the personal bonds that form during pre-service orientation and last beyond the service year. Our hope is that you all stay connected to each other, but also continue to be supporters of community health centers and national service. We are very happy to welcome Megan Tiso to serve a second year as an AmeriCorps Member and Alaina Betancourt as Open Door’s newly hired Outreach and Enrollment Coordinator. Congratulations to all of you and thank you for your service!

# A Global Perspective of Health Care

- Dan Kaufman

Each year, Unite for Sight hosts a Global Health & Innovation Conference at the site of their founding, Yale University. This conference is the world's largest conference of its kind, drawing more than 2200 people from 55 countries, including public health professionals (as speakers and attendees), physicians, non-profit professionals, policymakers, educators, scientists, and driven activists in their fields. This year, on April 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, the entire AmeriCorps Navigators drove to New Haven, Connecticut to participate in the conference and learn about the innovative developments taking place in the healthcare sector. There were over 130 speakers arranged into 5-6 workshop sessions each day, with overarching topics on intervention design, healthcare management, and global health technology. Within these topics, speakers discussed their own area of expertise, be it a particular disease, site of action, or academic background. This format allowed for the navigator team to hear many sides of an issue at their workshop, and to learn from the other navigators on our team when we met afterwards.

One of the highlights of the conference was the keynote speakers on Sunday morning. We heard Dr. Jeffery Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, present on his research in a presentation entitled "Information Technology and the Revolution in Health Care." He spoke about the effect of cellular technology on tracking and implementing interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa, and most excitingly, he speculated on what the next set of Millennium Development Goals might look like. Next, his wife, Dr. Sonia Ehrlich Sachs, Director of Health at the Millennium Village Project, presented "The 1 Million Community Health Worker Campaign." This project is a herculean effort that is coming into fruition to recruit 1 million local women to serve as primary and preventative healthcare providers, mainly for women's health, in an effort to drastically lower the under-five mortality rate. These workers will have unprecedented access to equipment and information technology via cell phone, allowing for detailed top-down management in an environment previously impenetrable. Lastly, Dr. Al Sommer, Dean Emeritus of the Bloomberg School of Public Health, presented "The Origins of Health: Our Behavior and Our Environment." This presentation described how many of our societal changes since the turn of the millennium have effected how long we live, the overall life quality that we experience, and the types of diseases that we are exposed to. He also forecasted how these will change over the next century.

These were only a few of the amazing topics and speakers that we heard from last month, much of which was able to be directly applied to the projects that we develop on-site. The AmeriCorps team came back to Open Door, charged up and prepared to get back to work!



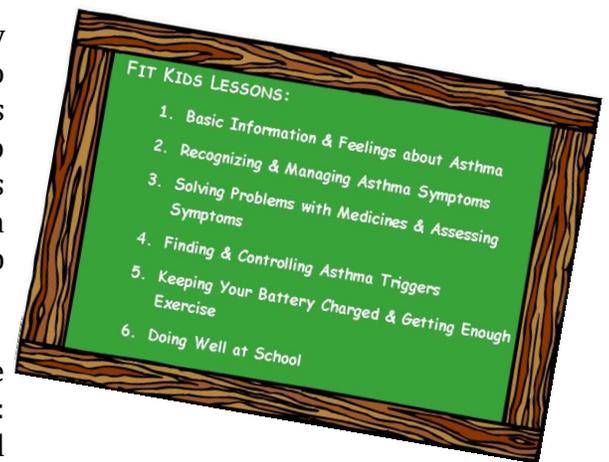
*To learn more about Unite for Sight and the Global Health & Innovation Conference, visit [www.uniteforsight.org/confnference](http://www.uniteforsight.org/confnference).*

# Fit Kids Program

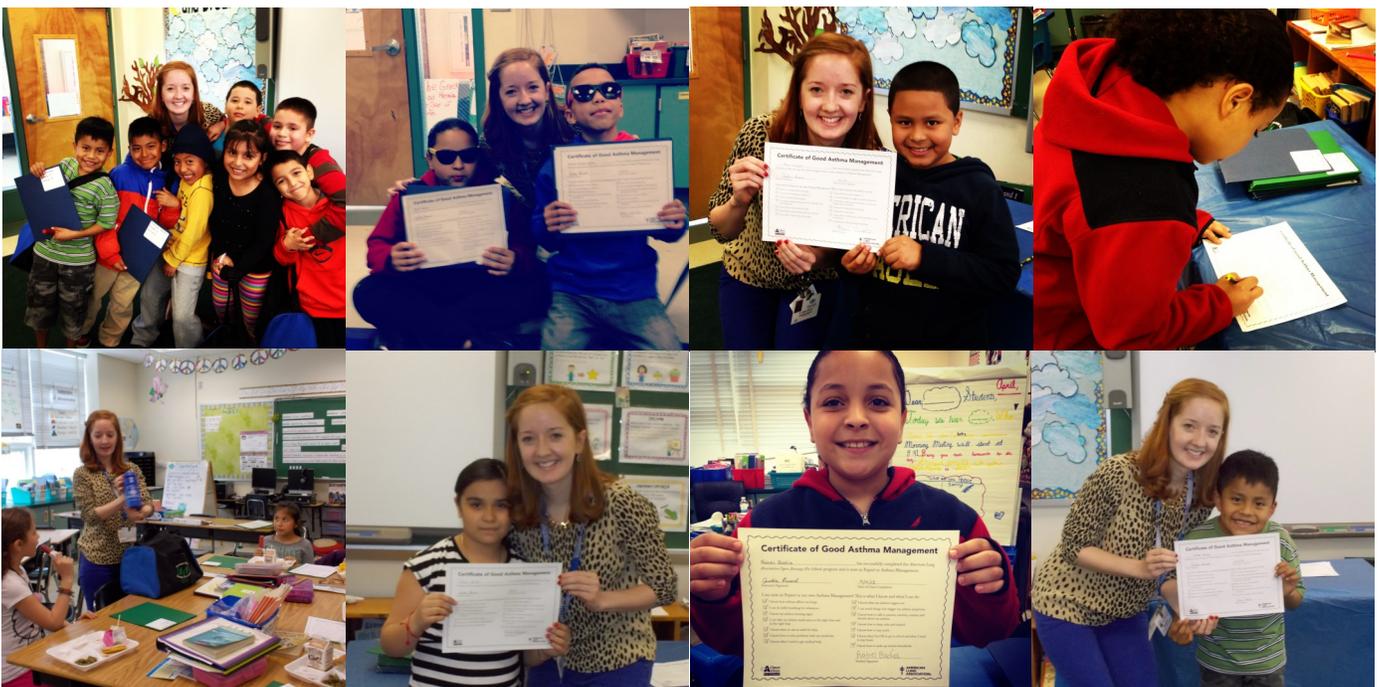
- Justine Record

Fit Kids is a school-based asthma management program for children with asthma that is developed by the American Lung Association. The program aims to help students control their asthma by knowing what sets off their asthma and taking steps to prevent it; recognizing asthma symptoms right away and taking steps to feel better; talking about and solving asthma problems with parents, doctors, nurses, teachers, and friends; and feeling confident about taking care of their asthma every day.

Each lesson involved interactive role-play to rehearse new skills, storytelling to stimulate problem-solving, games to practice decision-making, as well as worksheets. Students filled out progress reports at the end of each lesson to monitor their advancement through the classes. Letters went home with the students after each lesson to inform parents of what their child is learning and how they can help manage their child's asthma.



This year, AmeriCorps HealthCorps Navigators taught the 6-lesson program in three Port Chester elementary schools: JFK Magnet School, Park Avenue Elementary School, and Edison Elementary School. As the AmeriCorps Navigator at JFK Magnet School, I taught nineteen 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Each child took a pre-test before the program began and a post-test after the program ended. From these tests, I calculated that students had a ~41% increase in knowledge. At the end of the 6 lessons, I held a graduation ceremony for all the students, in which they received a "Certificate of Good Asthma Management" as well as a bag full of fun prizes and information. It was rewarding experience not only teaching the students how to control their asthma but getting to know them on a personal basis.



# Bringing *Recess Rocks!* to the Community

- Gavin Osorio



Teaching *Recess Rocks!* to children has been part of my job ever since I started as a Navigator. However, as the months passed by and children became busier with afterschool programs and sports, we noticed a decrease in the attendance. To address the situation, my supervisor, Lori Patsey, the Wellness Coordinator, suggested that we bring *Recess Rocks!* to the community and asked if I had any suggestions. The first place I thought of was St. Ann's School in Ossining!

Having attended St. Ann's from Pre-Kindergarten until second grade, I was familiar with the school and believed it would provide an age group that was perfect for the *Recess Rocks!* program. After meeting with the principal and supervisor, they became very excited to bring the program to their school and wanted to begin as soon as possible. Since then, I have spent every Wednesday afternoon leading the children in the dance

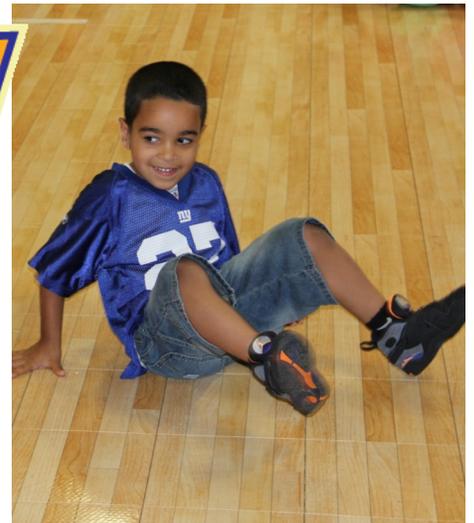
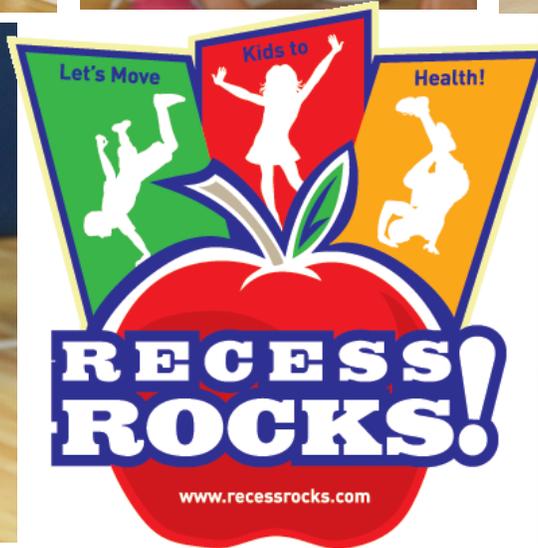
moves of *Recess Rocks!* Both the children and administration enjoy having the *Recess Rocks!* Program at their school and have welcomed us to extend our time at St. Ann's.

After seeing the success of *Recess Rocks!* at St. Ann's, Lori asked if we would bring the program



to the second grade students at Brookside School in Ossining. While at first I was hesitant to teach the older students because I had primarily dealt with younger children, Clara, the principal, reassured me that the children would truly appreciate the program. After four weeks of teaching the children during an afterschool program, I am glad that I chose to listen to Clara; the children were great and expressed their desire for us to extend our stay.

Over all, *Recess Rocks!* is a great program that makes exercise fun for children because they are not aware that they are even exercising! At first I was reluctant to do this program because I have never done something like this before, let alone teach it. However, I can honestly say it is a great way to get children moving while building a relationship for Open Door with various places throughout the community. I hope that more places would participate in programs similar to this one because not only do the children gain a sense of how to be healthy, but you also make an impact on their lives.



# Celebrating Children's Feelings

- Helena Herman



Children's Mental Health Awareness Day is celebrated across the country each year on May 9<sup>th</sup>. This Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of children's mental health in the context of healthy development. In honor of the day and the mission, Open Door Family Medical Centers celebrated "Children's Health and Happiness Day" at our Ossining and Port Chester sites.

Our Behavioral Health team and a few of our Community HealthCorps team members arranged a display table in the waiting areas, featuring children's books about expressing feelings and encouraging self-confidence. Kelly, Sam, and I enjoyed helping children pick out their favorite books for us to read aloud. These were available for children to take home with them.



Our Health Educators delivered a 5 minute parenting tips presentation to parents as patients stopped by with their children. The presentation, which was based on the Nurturing Parenting curriculum, focused on understanding our own feelings, understanding our children's feelings, and expressing and communicating effectively.



The celebration continued as Alaina and Kelly played the "Feelings" memory matching card game with children, while Sam and I helped children decorate paper characters using different feelings faces stamps. The memory matching card game helps children to associate emotions with facial expressions, and to use their words to explain how they are feeling. Through the art activity, children explored feelings further.

A total of fifty children participated at the two events. We provided each family with a gift bag of materials including Children's Health and Happiness themed stickers and a custom activity book we designed. Children also received the "Brain Reigns/ El Cerebro Reina" book by Janice Orlop Wachtel, and we provided parents with pamphlets, resource guides, and tips sheets.



# The Patient Portal: An Innovative Way for Patients to Connect to Their Health

- Zach Fowler

One of the values employed at Open Door is to provide patient-centered medical care. We try to achieve this aim by helping our patients become engaged in their care, rather than simply the recipients of services. One way of doing this is by using electronic health record (EHR) technology to more efficiently manage the health information of our patients and improve the quality of care. The federal government recognized the importance of this and, in 2009, enacted the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (also called HITECH) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. One of the provisions of this legislation provides incentive Medicaid payments for implementing EHRs and achieving Meaningful Use of the technology. The Meaningful Use criteria have been established as steps for adopting EHRs in a way that will be most effective and beneficial for patients. One of these standards is to provide patients with electronic access to their health information. Open Door's Patient Portal allows patients to do this as well as many other things, including scheduling/changing appointments, viewing lab results and immunization records, requesting prescription refills, viewing billing information, and emailing providers with any questions or concerns. These features are a great resource for our patients and will help them become more involved in managing their own health. To help patients learn about the Patient Portal and to create accounts for them, Alaina and I have been going to the Mount Kisco and Sleepy Hollow waiting rooms. We take laptops, so the patients can sign up while they're waiting for their appointment and we can show them how to use all of the features. So far, patients have been very interested in using the portal and being able to access it from home. They will no longer have to make additional trips or phone calls to Open Door for lab and test results or for prescription refills. And making or changing appointments online will give them more flexibility and help us accommodate their busy schedules so that coming to Open Door can be more convenient. For patients managing chronic diseases it will be especially helpful and could even improve clinical outcomes as we try to provide individualized care on a personal level.

Zach, Gavin, Dan, and Paul enjoying the view of Hudson River after the graduation celebration on July 9.

## Open Door Family Medical Centers' Reach Out and Read Program

# Barnes & Noble Bookfair

**- Samantha Tansey**

This year Open Door's Reach Out and Read teamed up with Barnes & Noble Booksellers to host a book fair. The official event was held at the White Plains Barnes & Noble location where Reach Out and Read planned a day of Dr. Seuss which included story-times, poetry, crafts, and a goldfish guess-a-thon, all in tribute to the beloved author, and to Reach Out and Read. The book fair was a way for Open Door and Reach Out and Read fans to show their support through their own love of literacy—any book that was purchased under Open Door's Reach Out and Read name had a percentage of its purchase price donated by Barnes & Noble to Reach Out and Read's need for books. AmeriCorps Navigators, Reach Out and Read volunteers, and Open Door supporters all came out to support and host the event throughout the day providing their time, their donations, and their support for childhood literacy. Though we had many enthusiastic children rhyming along with our Dr. Seuss story-times, and making their very best guesses at our Goldfish Bowl contest, the event itself wasn't as popular as we had initially hoped. We feared that the overall product donation wouldn't be enough to support Reach Out and Read's need for books. By the time we had wrapped up our things and cleaned our areas we were prepared to meet a less than impressive monetary turn out. However, the Customer Relations Manager of the Barnes & Noble White Plains location came out to greet us and update us on our progress—we had thus far made \$800! We were all pleasantly surprised that so many Open Door & Reach Out and Read supporters were shopping for the literacy program. We learned just how appreciated Open Door's Reach Out and Read program was and, in fact, by the end of the event Reach Out and Read's powerful support accumulated a \$1,109.92 gift card donation from Barnes & Noble. The donation enabled Reach Out and Read to buy the books we needed for our summer reading clubs, as well as much needed books for our program in general.

### *Project Spotlight: The Ossining Community Garden*

**- Alaina Betancourt**

On April 19th, the AmeriCorps reunited with the students of the St. Matthew's Head Start program to celebrate the beginning of the Spring season and commemorate Donna Sharrett for her work in the Ossining Community Garden. Since then, we have spent every Friday gardening with students and watching our plots transform from layers of dirt into luscious fruits and vegetables. The time spent at the Garden has allowed us to have both educational and memorable experiences, which we will take with us after we leave the AmeriCorps program. We are grateful for Donna's dedication to provide us with an interactive opportunity to learn about the importance and benefits of community gardens.



# Our Service

*Over the past year, I have worked with the patient advocates to improve the diabetes education groups that Open Door offers to its patients. I have written a monthly curriculum that enable our patients to build important skills in taking charge of their diabetes. The groups have covered important clinical topics like blood glucose monitoring and digestion, as well as behavioral ones like goal setting and the emotional impact of diabetes. We have also added biweekly Zumba Gold exercise sessions to the first hour of the group, under blood glucose controls that I worked with the patient advocacy team to develop and implement. I also cook a diabetic-friendly recipe for each group, using ingredients from a local grocery store. The groups have been very successful this year, attendance has been great, and the patients have a great time while learning valuable information!*

- Dan Kaufman

*I very much enjoyed my time contributing to Project LAUNCH and Ossining Communities that Care as an Open Door Community Healthcorps member. I have focused on workforce development, marketing, program evaluation, and programming and health education for children. My favorite memories include time spent presenting and discussing prevention campaign strategies during coalition meetings and providing follow-up coaching in the Nurturing Parenting Program to Open Door partners. I've also loved gardening with the children from St. Matthews Headstart, leading a Stand Up Against Bullying club at the middle school, and creating parenting tips presentations. I will begin medical school at SUNY Downstate in August. I will carry with me my experiences with wonderful co-workers and patients at Open Door.*

- Helena Herman

*This year I worked with Anita Wilenkin on outreach and program enrollment efforts. Our largest projects involved enrolling children in the Child Health Plus insurance program, educating uninsured patients at the Phelps Hospital emergency room about programs at Open Door, showing patients how to use the Patient Portal and creating accounts for them, and reaching out to women to encourage screening for cervical, colorectal, and breast cancer at Open Door through the New York State Cancer Services Program. One of my favorite things this year was the Rockwood Ramble 10K Race. Some of the other navigators and I formed a team to represent Open Door. It was a nice morning for a race and we ended up winning 2<sup>nd</sup> place! After my service term I will be moving back to my home state of North Dakota to attend medical school at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine.*

- Zachary Fowler

*As a Navigator for the Wellness Program, I spent my year promoting the benefits of healthy eating and exercise to children and adults. My days consisted of registering patients for classes, leading children in Recess Rocks! and teaching Open Door patients and the greater community about the importance of maintaining a healthy diet and regular exercise. I am most grateful for the personal connections I have formed with the patients of the Wellness Program during my year of service. I am constantly moved by the patients' commitment to attend Wellness classes and improve their health. I am also grateful for the opportunity to improve my Spanish skills throughout the year! After I finish my term, I will graduate from Massage Therapy School in September and hope to begin my career as a massage therapist.*

- Gavin Osorio

*As the Navigator for the Port Chester Middle School, I worked on projects that focused on promoting healthy lifestyles to the students. Through initiatives such as Red Ribbon Week and lunchroom lessons, students were presented with information on various topics, including illness prevention, summer safety, and the dangers of alcohol and tobacco use, during their lunch period. In an effort to encourage students to engage in physical activity, I worked on creating a Walking Program for middle school students. Geared with the equipment such as pedometers, water bottles, and booklets to refer to when tracking the number of steps taken during walks, students worked together to gain enough mileage to "walk across America". Of all these projects, I most enjoyed teaching the Life Skills curriculum, an evidence-based abuse prevention program, because it gave me the opportunity to get to know the students better and make a positive impact on their lives.*

- Paul Pickmans

*For the past year I have served as one of the AmeriCorps School-Based Health Centers Navigators at John F. Kennedy Magnet School. During the year, I created and taught health curricula through in-classroom lessons, lunchroom lessons, assemblies, and after-school lessons. One of my favorite programs at JFK was Fit Kids, a 6-lesson American Lung Association asthma management program for children with asthma. Every other week I met with 19 third and fourth graders at JFK. We discussed ways in which students can control their asthma so that they can feel confident to manage their asthma at school and at home. My favorite experience as an AmeriCorps was holding a "girls' club," in which I made myself available to the fifth grade girls following the puberty lessons for questions and concerns. Next year I will be returning to Maryland to attend medical school at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. I hope to one day become either a pediatric neurologist or pediatric psychiatrist.*

- Justine Record

*As the Navigator assigned to Port Chester High School, I focused on health education via classroom lessons, lunchroom campaigns, and after-school clubs. After being welcomed into the PE and health classes, I was able to interact with students during discussions of topics such as fad diets, tobacco, marijuana, and safe sex. During lunch periods, I campaigned against sugary drinks for National Food Day, against substance abuse for Red Ribbon Week, and against risky behavior for Prom season. As for after-school clubs, I facilitated a Healthy Chefs program for students to learn nutritious cooking, as well as expanded the Future Healthcare Leaders summer program to a year-round group. The Future Healthcare Leaders consisted of students interested in pursuing careers in healthcare, and I coordinated health-related field trips, guest speakers, and volunteer opportunities. As I reflect upon this past year, my AmeriCorps experience has been invaluable, but I am looking forward to starting my next adventure; this summer I will be moving down to New Orleans to attend Tulane University School of Medicine.*

- Kara Cicero

*Along with Kelly Austin, I helped manage the Reach Out and Read program at Open Door. I really enjoyed my term because it provided me the opportunity to experience areas of healthcare that I would not normally have the opportunity to experience on my own—including the lure of children's books, the influence of childhood literacy, community involvement, and event-planning. I'm really grateful for my position because it allowed me to express creativity and innovation through events ranging from book fairs to story-times to rejected blog proposals. My favorite projects this term have been the Barnes & Noble book fair and the Reach Out and Read Pajama Parties. The book fair was my favorite because it was an idea I managed to make come to fruition with the support of my supervisor and coworkers, and the suspense of the possibility that it might be a miss made the higher-than-expected resulted donation that much sweeter. After my Americorps term, I plan to attend nursing school to earn my BSN and to work in a community health center (that hopefully has a Reach Out and Read program of its own). I've met amazing people during my time at Open Door, and I hope to stay in touch with them long after my term's end.*

- Samantha Tansey

*For the past few months, I have been serving as an AmeriCorps member in the School-Based Health Centers. Park Avenue Elementary School in Port Chester, NY was my designated school. Throughout the school year, I taught a variety of lessons in the lunch room and in the after school program. Students learned about health-related topics, such as sleep, nutrition, dental health, bullying, and physical fitness, through interactive workshops and activities. One of my favorite programs was the Fit Kids Club, an asthma education program. I enjoyed teaching third, fourth, and fifth graders how to detect asthma warning signs, to deal with asthma triggers and to prevent or reduce their symptoms. I was happy that this program empowered the children to manage their asthma and allowed them to have healthy active lives. The Gardening Club was another great initiative that promoted healthy eating. Fourth and fifth grade students learned how to grow and take care of vegetables and herbs once a week during their recess period. Currently, I am running the Future Healthcare Leaders summer program for high school students. This program is becoming my favorite of the year. Students are learning how to deal with medical emergencies with CPR and First Aid training, and are participating in preventative health workshops, such as nutrition and fitness. They also are exploring numerous careers within the field of medicine. I believe that this program is truly making a huge impact in their lives as they are being introduced to the medical world while also making them aware about pressing issues healthcare providers and patients face when dealing with the healthcare system. After my year at AmeriCorps, I plan to get a job in the healthcare field and continue my education for a future career in medicine.*

- Mila Neyra

*This past year has definitely taught me a lot. I have learned how to function in an office environment, I have learned that teaching is not always easy but it is worth the effort, and I have also learned the value of friendships formed in the work place. AmeriCorps is an excellent program for someone like me, who wasn't really sure what she wanted to do after graduating from college. Despite the fact that I wasn't making much money and I was constantly trying to keep up my hours, AmeriCorps was a great place to spend my first year out of school. I was exposed to so many different career paths that I was unaware even existed. My experience was so great, in fact, that I am staying for a second year. I decided midway through the year that I would make a good elementary school teacher and would like to get more experience in the field before I begin graduate school for elementary education. I think that I benefitted greatly from my past year, and I think the Port Chester community benefitted as well.*

- Megan Tiso

*My role as the Community HealthCorps Navigator for the Marketing Department has allowed me to work on several outreach initiatives throughout the duration of my term. Over the past eleven months, I have attended numerous outreach events, informed community members about the services Open Door provides, and prepared health education programs on topics such as nutrition and women's health. One project that I have most enjoyed working on has been the initiative to keep children enrolled in the Child Health Insurance Plus program. By contacting the parents of children whose insurance needs to be renewed and setting up a recertification appointment for them, there has been a decrease in the number of children who lose coverage because they did not recertify. I have learned so much during my time as a Navigator and am grateful for the experiences I have had throughout my term.*

- Alaina Betancourt

*Coming into this year I was very uncertain of what my role was going to entail and where this year would lead me. I would have never guessed I was going to experience, learn, and accomplish as much as I have. As part of the wellness program I instructed patients of all age groups in physical education. Working with children, ages 3- 11 years old, and with all ages of adults, I was able to influence these individuals to improve their overall health and subsequently their lives through physical education. I now have experience and certifications as an instructor and educator in areas of health education, children physical education, group exercise instruction, and Zumba! In addition, I have gained experience working within a medical center. Seeing first-hand the connection that health and wellness has with the providers and exam rooms within the center was a huge benefit! It allowed me to secure my plans of gaining my masters in Physician Assistant studies and bringing a new perspective to the field from my background in Health, Wellness, and Exercise Science. Overall, this year has helped me most by pushing me outside of my comfort zone. The service opportunities presented to me encompassed much more than I could have imagined.*

- Jillian Dalton

*This year I was able to be part of the Reach Out and Read program. With Reach Out and Read I have worked with volunteers, planned programs and events, and promoted literacy with the families Open Door serves. My favorite projects so far have been the summer reading club and the Barnes and Noble Book Fair. I enjoyed these projects because I had the freedom to be creative and come up with themes and crafts for the children. After I complete my AmeriCorps service I hope to find a fulfilling job working in community health.*

- Kelly Austin