Fall 2020 is upon us! So that means we have many Houston Refugee VISTA Project members transitioning out AND we are welcoming in a new cohort of AmeriCorps State Adult Literacy members. We remain deeply grateful to our members that are either exiting, continuing, returning, or on-boarding. You all continue to demonstrate a commitment to national service by your willingness to serve communities within the great city of Houston. On behalf of The Alliance AmeriCorps programs, we’d like to welcome the following AmeriCorps State direct service members who will be serving as Adult Education and Literacy Instructors and Job Coaches from August 2020- July 2021:

- David Coles- Chinese Community Center
- Sister Theresa and Leboria Moore- Eastside University
- Nancy Boyette and Christina Hong- The Alliance FOC
- Jasmin De La Cerda- The Alliance Refugee Services
- Celeste Chela and Luis Garcia Alvarez SEDES
- Imran Khan, Jenny Rodriguez, and Ashley Chukwuemeka; Baker Ripley
- Adria Twyman and Zoe Clark- Adult Education Center

Welcome to the team! #houstonstrong

W. KaNeesha Allen; AmeriCorps Programs Director
AMERICORPS STATE ADULT LITERACY PARTNERS

With the generous support and commitment of our Adult Education and Literacy partners we will continue bolstering Houston's Workforce Readiness programs and services. We are excited to see the great impact our dedicated service members will make for the 2020-2021 term.

- The Alliance
- Adult Education Center
- Baker Ripley
- Chinese Community Centers
- East Side University Village Learning Center
- SEDES
- Memorial Assistance Ministries

VISTA OF THE MONTH
Alyssa Moinet; VISTA Leader for the Houston Refugee Project

Alyssa Moinet; VISTA Leader is being recognized as outstanding VISTA Leader! Due to her outstanding rapport with fellow VISTA members, her ability to operate with impeccable integrity, and willingness to uphold the true spirit of service, Alyssa SALUTE YOU and THANK YOU for all your contributions to the Houston Refugee VISTA Project!
Danielle brought crucial support to Plant It Forward Farms by working to professionalize our marketing materials, creating templates, capturing our work via photography, and overhauling our website with a brand new redesign. Working with her, we appreciated her creativity and work ethic. Her service year went by fast yet it was a productive one! We'll be able to attribute our future marketing & communications success to Danielle's term with us.

ALYSSA MOINET
By: W. KaNeesha Allen, AmeriCorps Programs Director

Alyssa Moinet served as VISTA Leader from September 2019 through September 2020. Through this time, she demonstrated exemplary professionalism, tactful VISTA member recruitment, exceptional communication with her peers and colleagues, compassionate outreach and engagement to support VISTA members throughout the term, and overall dedication to excelling in her role. Alyssa has been instrumental to the success and advancement of the entire program for the past year. It is with immense pleasure and gratitude to have worked with her and I'm wholly rooting for her next journey!

MEGAN METZ
By: Kerry Spare, Program Director at YMCA International Services

Megan has been one of the best VISTAs I have ever worked with, in one of the most challenging years in recent memory. Megan and I collaborated on many projects including our holiday Adopt a Family event which raised $96,000. We also collaborated on our Ramadan event where over 300 boxes of food were provided, and coordinated with our Food Pantry to help distribute food to more than 600 families on a weekly basis. Megan does a great job and has a fantastic “can-do” attitude, nothing was too daunting or difficult for Megan. If I had a task that needed completion, I knew I could give it to Megan and she would do an excellent job with it. We really appreciate all the hard work Megan has put in this year, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. She learned Spanish to help us answer the phones and complete intakes for families waiting in our food pantry car line, and worked with us outside in the heat of Houston summer to make sure families received food. And through all of this hardship, Megan kept an amazing attitude and was always smiling. We cannot thank Megan enough and wish her nothing but luck in all her future endeavors.
VISTA GOODBYES!

SHALETHIA JONES

By: Michelle Remy-Maillet, Coordinator of Entrepreneurship Programs, The Alliance

Shalethia served as the Communications and Marketing VISTA for the past year. Within the year she’s not only successfully developed and maintained The Community Cloths online presence and website, but has developed systems to build capacity in areas of the program that could not have been sustained without her diligent work and motivated spirit.

Accomplishments for the year include:

- Redesigned TCC website
- Managed social media presence for TCC
- Assisted sales totaling $11,000
- Created/distributed marketing flyers
- Oversaw collection of data for Dr. Sam Vong a curator at the Smithsonian Institute, who’s exhibit will showcase Southeast Asian immigration to the U.S post 1980 era
- Helped 2 clients create their online business
- Assisted 20+ clients with mental health and wellness, women’s empowerment, financial literacy and marketing
- Photographed 200+ pieces of inventory
- Collaborated with non-profit partners to increase PPE awareness during COVID-19
- Assisted training/professional development of 2 interns
- Created/oversaw revival of newsletter and blog

Shalethia accomplished many things this year and was an exemplary staff member who always went above and beyond to assist me with the program. She will be an invaluable member wherever she goes and we wish her the best of luck on all her new endeavors.

JESSE POTESTAS

By: Dr. Peta-Gay Ledbetter, PhD, LPC-S, NCC, Director of Clinical Services, Alliance Wellness Center

I am eternally grateful to have had Jesse as a VISTA for the Wellness Center this past year. He has become an intricate part of our department’s functionality and I’m not sure what we will do without him. Projects he has spearheaded have all centered around his organizational skills and knowledge of IT. He’s built several databases from scratch to help us to keep track of clients both in the office and in the community, which helps immeasurably with grant reports and documenting community needs.

He’s been instrumental in getting the CDBG database together which benefits no less than 7 Alliance programs. He created online surveys for client feedback, in Spanish and English and was able to produce graphs from the data gathered. Jesse has willingly organized and inventoried our donations closet, volunteered with Alliance events, helped with interpretation and translation in Spanish and French, and was part of a multilingual Video series to help clients during COVID. I really can’t say enough about his positive impact on the Wellness Center, or how much he will be missed.
**Things To Do**

Houston:
- The Drive-In at Sawyer Yards
- Virtual Buffalo Bayou Boat Tour
- Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Virtual Experiences

Virtual Tours & Streaming:
- Visit the 7 Wonders of the World Virtually
- Take a Visit to a National Park
- Google Arts Project: Street Art
- NPR Tiny Desk Concert Series
- Latinx Heritage Month Virtual Lecture and Film Series

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Webinars and Courses:

**50 Free Nonprofit Webinars for September:**
- **September 1st & 8th:** Engaging Volunteers in the New Normal
- **September 9th:** Trauma-Informed Nonprofit Leadership
- **September 16th:** Turning Non-Profits into Visual Storytellers
- **September 29th:** Using #GivingTuesday to Engage Your Mid-Level Donors

**Free Courses:**
- **8 Certifications to Add to Your Resume**
- **10 Online Certification Courses to Advance Your Career**
- **Harvard Online Learning:** Exercising Leadership: Foundational Principles

**Self Care Corner**

Health and Mindfulness:
- **12 Best Meditation Apps for 2020**
- **The Best Free Yoga Classes Online**
- **Fitness Blender, Free Workout Videos and Resources**

**Ted Talk Playlists:**
- **The Pursuit of Curiosity and Understanding**
- **10 Guiding Principles for Leaders**
- **How to Invest in Social Good**
- **Tapping into Our Collective Empathy**
- **Dissecting Cultures of Hate**
- **The Importance of Self-Care**

**Podcasts:**
- **20 Best Self-Help Podcasts**
- **NASW Social Work Talks Podcast:** Self Care and Avoiding Burnout

**Articles and Resources:**
- **Develop Your Self-Care Plan**
- **Self-Care Assessment Worksheet**
- **Rethinking Our Self-Care During the Pandemic**
- **Toolkit for Building a Self-Care Plan**