AmeriCorps is a national network of hundreds of programs throughout the U.S. committed to using national service to address critical community needs in education, public safety, health and the environment. TRIAD is funded through the Volunteer Mississippi state commission office.

TRIAD AmeriCorps is part of The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies (IDS). The 2016-17 service program focuses on providing health-related education to improve lifestyle changes for youth with disabilities. As an all-inclusive AmeriCorps program, members also receive professional development training covering résumé building, interview skills, computer literacy skills and leadership skills.

The TRIAD AmeriCorps members have been busy developing new program activities to supplement the current health and wellness program and recruiting individuals to be part of the TRIAD AmeriCorps program. They also have partnered with local community agencies to continue providing services. The partners include City of Hattiesburg, Edward Street Thrift Store, Goodwill, Life Support Cares, Gulf Coast Autism/Asperger Young Adult Support Group, Southern Pines Animal Shelter, local k-12 schools, Keesler Thrift Store and City of Biloxi Senior Programs (stretch & strengthen class).

For additional information on the Institute for Disability Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi, visit www.usm.edu/disability-studies.
Meet the Full-time Members!

Richard Kautz
I was born and raised on the island of Saipan CNMI. My hobbies are video games, fitness and spear fishing. I’m a military vet with six years of active duty as an air force kc-135 aircraft mechanic. I joined the TRIAD AmeriCorps program to further my personal life experience and to gain a deeper knowledge of working with individuals with disabilities. In my spare time, I serve as a counselor and personal wellness coach.

Daphne Jackson
I’m a native of Gulfport, Miss. I’m a caring wife and mother. I attended MGCCC and plan on furthering my education at USM. This is my first year of being a member of the TRIAD AmeriCorps, and I’m very delighted for this opportunity. I enjoy lyrical dancing and spending time with family and friends. I decided to join AmeriCorps because of the passion that I have in making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Jaharah Frye
I’m a native of Natchez, Miss., and moved to Hattiesburg to attend The University of Southern Mississippi. My certifications include EMT and CNA. After completing 300 hours with the TRIAD AmeriCorps service in the summer of 2016, I decided to continue my commitment to serving my community by taking a year off from school and applying for a full-time AmeriCorps position. I wanted to continue working with the AmeriCorps program because I feel a sense of pride when making a difference in someone’s life. My hobbies are reading, listening to music, and spending time with my family.
Jasmine “Co Co” Whiteside became one of the most active and enthusiastic TRIAD AmeriCorps leaders during the 2015-16 program year. Jasmine has suffered through many medical complications over the years, but this did not stop her from serving the needs of the community. After being in a coma for seven months at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (Jackson, Miss), in January 2014, Jasmine was diagnosed with a rare disease called anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis. According to Neurol (2011), individuals with the disease develop “multistage illness that progresses from psychosis, memory deficits, seizures, and language disintegration into a state of unresponsiveness and catatonic features often associated with abnormal movements, and autonomic and breathing instability.” After two years of recovery, Co Co continued her undergraduate studies and graduated in 2015 and joined the TRIAD AmeriCorps program. “When Jasmine contacted me about joining the AmeriCorps program, I was excited because I knew of her past involvement in community service activities. She stated that she did not want to join the AmeriCorps program because she had a disability, but because she missed getting involved in the community and working alongside other individuals with disabilities” stated Jin Joo Crosby.

Co Co’s story
After serving my community through an inclusive TRIAD AmeriCorps program, I began my journey as a Ph.D. student studying sociology at The Ohio State University (OSU). After years of a mixture of sickness and recovery, I was finally well enough to complete my B.S. degree at The University of Southern Mississippi and once again became involved with my community through the TRIAD AmeriCorps program housed under the Institute for Disability Studies. Because of my involvement with TRIAD AmeriCorps, I was able to gain some of the independence that had been taken away from me by the horrible illness, Anti-NMDA Receptor Encephalitis. The leaders and members of TRIAD AmeriCorps let me lead service projects, requested that I be organized and punctual and, probably more importantly, respectful. These are traits that I did not get to practice much while I was hospitalized and still in severe mental/physical recovery. Because of the TRIAD AmeriCorps program, I regained my sense of academic pride and drive for social change, thus leading to the rise of my self-confidence, my ability to travel to the many Universities, perform face-to-face interviews, write several academic essays, and finally be accepted into one of the country’s elite sociology programs at my dream school.

Co Co has served as an inspiration to her AmeriCorps team and staff and community members. We will miss her but are excited about her next chapter as an Ohio State University graduate student.

To learn more about her story, https://www.methodistonline.org/view-news/54108.

Reference:
August 2016 End of Year Training
Disability Health and Wellness Camp
Jellystone Park, Pelahatchie, Miss
TRIAD AmeriCorps received a Certificate of Appreciation award for volunteer service on September 17, 2016, from the Life Support Cares nonprofit organization. The nonprofit organization located in Hattiesburg, Miss provides basic needs, such as nonperishable foods, clothing and hygiene/household products to low income individuals and families. The AmeriCorps members volunteer on a weekly basis and assist by sorting and grouping, and packaging and distributing donated items to low income individuals and families.


If you have information or news you would like include in the next newsletter, email information to jin.mcclendon@usm.edu by October 10.

Program Contact Information:
Jin Joo M. Crosby, Program Coordinator
Institute for Disability Studies
118 College Dr. #5163
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
601.266.6037

TRIAD AmeriCorps is a program of the Institute for Disability Studies (IDS) at The University of Southern Mississippi. Funding is provided through a grant from the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Services.