

## 2018 Excellence in AmeriCorps Awards

Nominating Ana Galeas Martinez, current AmeriCorps VISTA Member serving at Up2Us member organization DC SCORES (Washington, DC) for Most Compelling Member Experience.

Nominated by Carl Cohen, DC SCORES Fellow, ccohen@dcscores.org.

*“Continue to not stop and never look back. The more things you’ll do, the more you’ll be happy about yourself.” – Ana*

Terror and gang violence forced Ana’s parents to flee their native El Salvador. They sought a new life, and started a family in Washington, DC. Tragically, even in America’s capital, terror and gang violence was inescapable. Ana was the youngest in a house of ten people living as an extended family in one of DC’s poor Hispanic neighborhoods. The noted MS-13 gang - with direct ties to the El Salvador base her parents were trying to escape - had a strong presence in the neighborhood where Ana grew up. Her parents only let her out of the house when it was safe, yet she heard gunshots, people fighting on the corner, and saw daily drug-related violence. While in elementary school, Ana’s father paid her five dollars to paint over the MS-13 logos and graffiti in the alleyways adjacent to her home. Fortunately, Ana’s father was president of a neighborhood soccer team. He encouraged her to join DC SCORES in third-grade to play soccer. Ana continued playing soccer then onto refereeing and assistant coaching at DC SCORES as a teenager. Her life hit a setback when she could not afford college. AmeriCorps provided Ana with an alternative that changed her life’s path.

AmeriCorps enabled Ana to continue moving forward and not look back. Being an AmeriCorps member completely changed how Ana views herself and has enabled her to set a path toward independence, success, and a commitment to keep moving forward. At DC SCORES, Ana absorbs the full measure of what a professional office environment has to offer.

She is using the stipend to take courses at a well-regarded community college. Her goal is to matriculate in a 4 year college, hopefully the University of Maryland.

The AmeriCorps experience has ignited Ana’s self confidence and broadened her perspective. Formerly a DC SCORES participant and high school volunteer, she has become a spokesperson for our organization. Ana’s is effective at managing relationships with coaches, schools, students, and program staff. Her writing skills have improved significantly, given a stream of office related work and coursework. She mentors elementary school students facing the challenges she overcame.



It is a pleasure to see Ana’s positive, assertive nature in that nurturing role. She is absorbing and growing from a wide-ranging set of experiences in a mentoring environment. Her remarkable path eluded almost inescapable violence as she now joins the broader world as an effervescent, capable, ambitious, and generous young woman. AmeriCorps was truly transformational and we take great pride in nominating Ana Galeas Martinez for this award.

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Ana sits alongside former Philadelphia mayor Michael Nutter at the Brookings Institute, describing her life experiences.