It has been said the presence of ethical civic responsibility is typically the reason that drives candidates to become AmeriCorps members. Although this may be true for most, there are still a large number of AmeriCorps members who dedicate a year or more of service to take time to figure out their next logical life move while doing something that just feels right. Mahatma Gandhi once said that “the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”. I believe that this holds true for one particular member at the Cincinnati Zoo Unto Others program in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Sabrina Calhoun came into the year hoping to develop skills related to program coordination, leadership, and personal/professional development. She gained that and so much more. Being able to build programming at the Zoo to enhance STEM education and AmeriCorps outreach gave her all the skills she hoped for, but it also gave her pride, respect, and love for service to others. The students she serves teach and inspire her ever day to stay committed, to have passion, and to continuously grow.

Sabrina endured compelling personal circumstances only to have positive changes meet up with her through experiences within her year of service. She has found a new passion for a career path and secured full-time employment in volunteer coordination at the end of the service term. She credits her year of service to the success in her accomplishments of obtaining employment and discovering the impact of volunteering. She has experienced a wide range of emotions from overwhelming frustration to immense joy and happiness because of her dedication to AmeriCorps, the Zoo, and (most importantly) the economically disadvantaged students she serves.

The AmeriCorps members created new self-guided activity sheets, taught various animal education programs, and conducted overnight programs for numerous school field trips. It was because of these AmeriCorps member interventions and activities that 11,236 students were able to come on a field trip to the Cincinnati Zoo in the 2016-2017 school year. Almost all of these students or their teachers interacted with the AmeriCorps members either directly or indirectly through program registration, arrival to the zoo, learning on zoo grounds, or taking follow up surveys after their zoo experience.

“Without this service year, I don't think I would have been given the chance to follow a new career path and my new found passion for volunteer administration. I'm beyond excited to start my new role and hopefully one day coach future AmeriCorps members in volunteer services. While I never expected to grow this much, from a vague idea of who I was as a leader and what I may want to do with my life, to someone who is confident in their ability to adapt in leadership and knows their career passion . . . AmeriCorps service has been one of the best and challenging experiences of my life, thus far, and I wouldn't change a thing!!" ----Sabrina Calhoun

Sabrina Calhoun’s compelling member experience truly makes her #1of1million!



