Goodwill Youthbuild AmeriCorps member, Michael Graham is being nominated for the Most Compelling Member Experience Harkin award. Norman Barnes with Goodwill Youthbuild Nebraska [nbarnes@goodwillomaha.org](mailto:nbarnes@goodwillomaha.org) has nominated Michael because as a member he is equipped with the tools to complete his high school education, is provided positive opportunities within his community, and is given the opportunity to make healthy decisions that will affect him the rest of his life. Michael has capitalized on all of the aforementioned opportunities and choices. He has received his GED, is serving within his community, making healthy decisions that are currently building a better life that he never thought was possible.

The Goodwill Youthbuild AmeriCorps program provides opportunities to a world of possibilities. Michael has been an AmeriCorps member for two years. His motivation from the start was his desire to have a high quality of life. While serving as an AmeriCorps member, he not only earned his high school diploma, he has earned numerous certifications, built a solid work ethic, increased his drive to learn, and is an invaluable member of a dynamic team that never gives up and always gives back to the community.

During his service Michael took the initiative, although with no children of his own, to successfully complete the Boys Town Common Sense Parenting® for Toddlers and Preschoolers classes. His achievement is setting an example for others he serves in the community. The seven week program's easy-to-learn techniques addressed issues of communication, discipline, decision making, relationship building, self-control, and staying calm.

The proactive skills and techniques taught in Common Sense Parenting® provided Michael with a menu of proven techniques that has aided him in his service in his community with the Stay in School Stop the Violence Foundation. While serving with the Foundation, Michael is coming alongside parents of junior high school students and assisting with early intervention to prevent and correct student misbehavior. By addressing issues, and fostering a good school environment, solidifying family relationships, and helping students understand the consequences of misbehavior, he is optimistic about the positive social growth in his community. He is a mentor, and role-model to the young children involved and to others in the community. He is actively equipping children with the tools to have positive behaviors, which lead to a better future.

Michael’s service with Goodwill Youthbuild AmeriCorps has helped him to focus on a career in positive community service development coupled with mentoring young adults and plans to focus on obtaining a college degree in social work.

Michael believes that the people in his community saved his life. The path he started on was headed to a large amount of jail time. His AmeriCorps service lead him to stop wasting time, get and stay focused, and be involved, through service, within his community. Michael takes comfort in knowing that he is now paying i forward what his community invested in him. He is “Getting Things Done” through service for himself, his community, and his country.