**Excellence in AmeriCorps Awards 2018**

**Most Compelling Member Experience**

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College Possible is nominating Amanda Missee Yang, an AmeriCorps alumnus who served with College Possible at Washington Technology Magnet School in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the category of Most Compelling Member Experience.

For Amanda Yang, AmeriCorps service changed her life, both as a recipient of the dedication an AmeriCorps service member showed her, and as a member herself, dedicating two years of her life to serving others.

As a high school student from a low-income family, Amanda signed on to the College Possible program as a junior in high school. In the program, her AmeriCorps coach, David, provided the peer-to-peer mentoring and support she needed to stay focused on her journey to college. Just as importantly, he provided Amanda with the sure knowledge that she was never alone. Memories of her AmeriCorps coach and the way his support had changed her trajectory led Amanda to sign on for service after earning her undergraduate degree from the College of Saint Benedict in Collegeville, MN. “Going through the public school system, and knowing what it means to be supported and believed in…I knew I wanted to spread the light in my community and inspire others to do the same.”

And that’s just what she did. She joined AmeriCorps for the 2016-17 academic year, coaching junior high school students at Washington Technology Magnet School, and senior high school students the following year. “Working directly with these students every day…seeing them apply to college, reading their acceptance letters with them, watching them struggle with family commitments and financial issues…I don’t have the words to describe how amazing they are,” Amanda says.

Those two years once again changed Amanda’s plans for the future. When she had graduated from college, she felt undecided about a future career, not certain which field she wanted to pursue. Her years as an AmeriCorps member – the confidence she gained, the tools she developed, the people she met and the visible effect she had on young people’s lives – helped crystalize her thoughts.

“Through this experience, I have learned that it really takes one person believing in you to change your whole life.” Using that revelation, she has begun a search for graduate programs that will allow her to play a role in providing more opportunities for young people, opportunities she herself has benefited from. “My service taught me so much and opened me up to the possibility of developing my skills even more. I want to expand my knowledge of culture and communication, and learn more about how people talk to each other in such a big world.” It’s a goal worthy of an AmeriCorps service member.