The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) leadership nominates Graham Hughes, an AmeriCorps VISTA member, for the Most Impactful Service Member category. While the entire RMAPI staff fully supports this nomination, Graham is officially being nominated by the RMAPI Director of Operations, Dr. Rashid Muhammad.

Rashid’s email is [Rashid.muhammad@uwrochester.org](mailto:Rashid.muhammad@uwrochester.org).

Well beyond his nascent professional experience, Graham Hughes has offered critical contributions and leadership towards resolving some of the nation’s most intractable and sustained poverty issues. As a Collective Impact initiative, RMAPI’s success is based on effective collaboration across several community organizations. The overarching goal is to reduce local area poverty by addressing the systemic causes that sustain intergenerational poverty. Graham developed sustainable processes that underscore RMAPI’s governance, working groups, and advisory committees. With keen insight, he ensured RMAPI’s organizational elements used empirically-driven and person-centered approaches to resolving tough issues. His work resulted in a first of a kind Collective Impact processes that aligned employment processes, facilitated social service provision synergies, and infused data-driven interventions. As a new initiative, RMAPI and the community have benefited from Graham’s thorough understanding of Collective Impact methods and his enthusiastic commitment to moving anti-poverty efforts forward. While Graham’s operational support has been critical to RMAPI’s functions, he has truly been invaluable in the area of community engagement.

Within a year’s time, Graham has become the focal point for RMAPI’s Community Advisory Council (CAC) – a volunteer community group that represents and integrates the voice of impoverished and marginalized communities. The CAC has a key and differentiating advisory role in all facets of RMAPI’s anti-poverty strategies and activities. Graham’s efforts supersede logistical support to the CAC’s operational endeavors. Fundamentally, the CAC’s strength is rooted in sincere and sustained relationships. Graham’s authenticity, genuine care, and profound emotional intelligence have yielded several deeply-trusting relationships with a diverse array of CAC members. In a community that continues to be highly polarized along racial and economic strata, Graham’s relationship-building efforts have created invaluable relationships that exemplify, and form the core, of everything RMAPI stands for and hopes to accomplish.

In addition to his other exemplary efforts, Graham led RMAPI’s Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) implementation. To educate citizens in direct democracy efforts, Graham recruited a diverse Community Leadership Team to oversee the PBP. He planned the PBP events, designed outreach materials, established communications networks, and built important partnerships throughout the community. Graham is also a member of the local United Way’s Inclusion Council. As a key contributor, he led development of a plan to educate United Way employees on interpersonal, institutional, systemic, and structural racism. The Inclusion Council’s work directly aligns with one of RMAPI’s guiding principles, Addressing Structural Racism, and serves as a model for other community organizations.

Graham Hughes is truly a social justice leader that has bettered RMAPI’s effectiveness and affirmatively touched the lives of colleagues and community members. Graham lives the values of equity, social justice, and improving the community through his words and actions. He represents the best of AmeriCorps VISTA’s service, ethos, and positive organizational outcomes.