

2008-2009 AmeriCorps Year

Women In Distress is proud to be a part of the state AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps is a national organization dedicated to community service in different states throughout the nation. The federal funding gives Women In Distress an opportunity to recruit twenty full-time team members each year to further the mission of its Social Change Department. The AmeriCorps members are responsible for providing Broward County with domestic violence awareness and prevention through presentations, community outreach and advocacy. AmeriCorps members are given a living allowance and awarded an educational stipend in return for their yearlong dedication to the program.

The members use a mix of curriculum and creative approaches in their presentations to impact the diverse communities and agencies in Broward County. Different members are assigned to different communities, such as the legal, medical, faith-based, Caribbean, GLBT, and incarcerated communities, in addition to the dozens of public schools that they attend regularly.

One of our audiences is school-age boys and girls. Our elementary curriculum gives students a solid foundation to start with by promoting a world fueled by respect and communication, as well as featuring anti-bullying lessons that complement Florida's recent anti-bullying legislation.

Young adults aged 14-23 are the most vulnerable to becoming victims of dating violence and abuse, and the high school curriculum is aimed at awareness and prevention of abuse. AmeriCorps members for Women in Distress teach the warning signs of abuse, how to help a friend in trouble, and emphasize the more general differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships. The end goal of the teen-focused curriculum is to provide youth the tools to identify abuse in their own lives and in the lives of their loved ones, as well as to equip them with the knowledge to help those in need. See our complete summary of the school-based curricula.

Just as teachers do, the Social Change Department subscribes strongly to the notion that children really are our future, and our effect on the school-aged community is vital. Aside from our presentations, the members are also working hard to inspire teenagers to take the initiative to fight their own age-appropriate fight against dating violence. The members facilitate meetings, provide venues and provide materials to encourage teens to make an impact in their own schools and spread the message of healthy relationships from their own mouths.

Our legal-based members often have the opportunity to assist those in direct need by providing information and support at the Broward County courthouse. Their services range from accompanying the Women in Distress participants to court, to providing information to the patrons of the county restraining order office. These members also have the most prominence in the county's detention centers, for both juveniles and adults.

The community-based members are given the most diverse tasks. These members establish contacts with other groups around the county by partnering for community events via speaker's bureau tables and presentations. They also have the opportunity to work in-house more directly with the Women

in Distress participants-- they provide advocacy as well as assist with several of the agency's groups for participants.

The medical community works directly with victims of domestic abuse on a daily basis, and unfortunately there are still plenty of professionals that mishandle or subscribe to harmful myths about domestic violence and intimate partner abuse. Our medical-based AmeriCorps members reach out to Broward's medical community to explain ways of handling victims that will prevent further abuse, as well as being able to identify victims in their offices. Members that specialize in the medical arena also give domestic violence presentations to audiences in different mental health and substance recovery facilities as part of their reach.

In a community as large and diverse as Broward County, the AmeriCorps team reaches out to several of its otherwise marginalized communities such as its Caribbean, Elder, and GLBT populations by establishing a presence at their organizations and neighborhoods.

A vital audience we have only recently begun to access is the religious community in Broward. Our faith-based members are single-handedly creating a network that intersects differences in faith and creed to alert these groups of domestic violence's prevalence, along with all its varied forms. This new relationship between the strong, sustained religious communities already at work and domestic violence prevention is a promising and progressive attempt by the Social Change department to encourage all faiths to adopt the singular message that intimate partner violence and abuse is unacceptable.

As Women in Distress' AmeriCorps program moves through its second year, the members better adapt their prevention presentations to broader audiences, and their relationships with community members and one another only become more hopeful.

Some Highlights from the 08-09 Year

Women In Distress celebrated the 3rd annual AmeriCorps Week, which took place May 9-16, 2009. This week provided the perfect opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, and friends to shine a spotlight on the work WID's members do as well as to motivate more Americans to serve their communities.

WID's AmeriCorps members planned and participated in several events this week. In addition to the events, members presented to community groups on AmeriCorps.

[Click here to view photos from the week.](#)

Coconut Creek High School DF-Y-IT
takes time out of their day to support Women In Distress

Drug Free Youth In Town (DF-Y IT) is an organization dedicated to giving recognition to kids who choose to live a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. They do this by providing drug information, as well as

opportunities to learn leadership skills through community service activities and educational field trips. This past April, the D-FY IT club of Coconut Creek High School devoted their time and care to cleaning out Lorraine House, a former Women in Distress safety shelter. Forty students and their sponsor, Marlene Newton, arrived at nine a.m. with garbage bags, mops and gloves. The members' efforts spanned from moving couches to scrubbing ovens clean. Their efforts readied Lorraine House for its upcoming sale, an important step towards Women in Distress' relocation to Deerfield Beach in the coming year.

We would like to give a very special thank you to all the students and sponsors who participated in the clean-up. You all were truly amazing to work with.

[Click here to view photos](#)

AmeriCorps Members hard at work:

Members take a creative approach to ensure awareness and prevention are spread throughout Broward County. [watch the video.](#)

[Click here to view photos](#) of members in action