

Speech given by Mathew Stuckey, Homeport AmeriCorps 2012 at the 2013 Celebration of Service:

Hey everyone! For those of you who don't know, my name is Mat and I was an AmeriCorps member a year ago at Marsh Run with Gloria. Now, I was told to keep this to 3 minutes, but for those in the room who know me and how verbose I can be, we will see if that actually happens.

Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give". This quote is by definition the idea of service. The idea that our lives are not created by money, obviously by those big balla paychecks we get as AmeriCorps member, but it is by the work and dedication we have for our community. AmeriCorps is about giving back, the idea that it takes a village to fix things, to raise a child, or to help the elderly in their final years of life. It is about making a difference; about having your own personal stamp on the past, present and future of the world that we live in.

Now, let's be honest for a second. When most of signed up to be part of the AmeriCorps team, we didn't know what we were signing up for. Some of us were just out of college, some were tired of their glamorous retail jobs, or felt or liked the idea of doing something for the community. I know, personally, I liked the concept of working with children and the idea of giving back to the community. However, nothing in my life prepared me to see, act, and feel all of the things that AmeriCorps gave me in return. We all know those long hours, preparing new learn plans, redesigning the classroom, and having to design new community engagement events didn't make this year a cake walk. The students that I didn't know what to do with or how to handle were never easy. I mean, I know I felt like I tried everything. We all have felt those feelings at one time or another. In those moments, though, I want you to think about all of the things you accomplished. Remember that smile from a student. That light bulb that went off. The emotional, raw conversation you had with a teen. That parent's tears of happiness that you took time out of your day for their child. Now, how many people can say that have done something like that? Through this experience, you have developed a special, personal relationship that many go throughout life always longing for. The hard work has helped you develop the strength of character, drive and determination that places you into a category above the average public and honestly, will help propel you to that next step you want to go in life.

Now that your year is almost over, I want to remind you of these little things that we forget in the everyday struggles that we call life. You have what other don't; strength, character, drive, determination and a true shared experience with all of your other AmeriCorps member that have, in one way or another, inspired you to be you, to get through it, or to make it better. You all have stood, side by side, achieving the same goal, in your own way, making this world, this generation, all of these students achieve their goals and raise above all else. Always remember, you were instrumental what these students will become, and that they couldn't do it without you, a positive, strong role model for them. These are your students and what feels like your children.

So I will leave you where I began, with Sir Winston Churchill. As you leave as AmeriCorps members and start a new and exciting adventure, remember, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give".

Thank you.