

School Partnership Brings Tradition Of Volunteerism | CPD Blog

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Every Tuesday, Ann Egeland puts on a hip outfit and goes back to school. It's not that she's fashion-conscious, but as a former teacher and current volunteer with Public & School Partnership's community and senior volunteer program, she knows: Seventh grade girls notice everything. She loves them for it. "I absolutely adore seventh and eighth graders," she said. "They're still little kids and they're trying so hard to crack the shell to be adolescents. ... If we can help by making the school a little more friendly, I think that would help." Egeland is one of many volunteers with the Public & School Partnership, which recently became part of the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University. PSP focuses on providing services to underserved and at-risk populations in Northern Utah by helping them access resources, especially those needed for educational success. The program utilizes full time AmeriCorps VISTA Members, as well as community and senior volunteers, to bolster programs and provide services in local schools and community centers.

Rikki Wheatley-Boxx "Our program seems to work best for people who want a change or are in a transition period in their lives," said Rikki Wheatley-Boxx, PSP's Director; whether it's moving from high school to college, college to employment or employment to retirement "It gives them [volunteers] a ton of professional development and professional experience," Wheatley-Boxx said. "Our job or college-related placement rate is around 95 percent." The VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) members receive a \$1,026 per month living stipend in exchange for their full-time service with a local partner site. These sites include many schools, The Family Place, the Logan Family Center, Stokes Nature Center, the Northern Utah Native Connection, and USU's education outreach program. Upon completion of their one-year service commitment, VISTA Members are eligible to receive an educational award of \$5,815. VISTA members and community volunteers provide a variety of services focused on helping all students, including those in need of tiered interventions. Their projects include providing support in counseling centers, increasing parent involvement, coordinating tutoring and mentoring programs, and increasing school attendance. Additionally, they connect students and families to resources that help address food insecurity, mental illness, parenting, and healthy relationships. It is making a difference in the community. Kris Hart, a counselor at Mountain Crest High School in Hyrum, has seen their impact firsthand in a school where one in four students is food insecure. VISTA volunteers created a program called The Giving Place that has opened a food pantry and offered school supplies and clothing to students. It has collected donations from local businesses and organizations, and shared them with students and their families. "We've noticed a change in behavior because the kids aren't hungry," Hart said. Last year the Giving Place collected and distributed 11,000 pounds of donated goods. Volunteers also band together to help out other community groups for an annual service project. "Our company is made up of about 22 people, and so we split the project into two days with eight hour shifts," said Dawna Webb, a VISTA volunteer currently.

Ann Egeland serving at Mountain Crest High school. "That way we don't overburden them with volunteers, but we give our entire group time to serve with them." Last year they helped Sub for Santa. "It was an incredible opportunity to see firsthand the impact we were able to have with the families involved with it," Webb said. Egeland enjoys seeing the impact of her work on individual students. The former educator is there for the girl or boy who quietly struggles in the back of the room over a math assignment, and she knows what they need. They don't need to feel stupid in front of their teacher or peers or family members. They just need a friend to help them with math. "The best pay you can get is when they have that 'Aha!' moment when they get it, and they know they can handle it," Egeland said. "It's wonderful. I really look forward to it." For more information on the [Public School Partnership](#), or to find out how to get involved.