

Strengthening Volunteerism in NYC

Posted At : October 22, 2009 3:06 PM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff
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by Phillip Cooke

This year, almost two hundred **volunteers** will be doing their best to spur volunteering throughout New York City, and I am happy to count myself as one of them. The project that has brought us all together is the **NYC Civic Corps**, founded by Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Our goal is to harness the power of New York's population and focus it toward improving the city.

Myself and the close to 200 members of the Corps's inaugural class have been assigned in small teams to about sixty public agencies and non-profit organizations throughout the five boroughs. For the next year, our jobs are designed to "pay it forward" while helping to create new, or develop existing, volunteer programs. Through doing this, the Civic Corps aims to strengthen our city's network of volunteer programs and engage more New Yorkers in meaningful service, creating lasting changes in New York City

The Civic Corps is affiliated with **Americorps VISTA**, a national poverty reduction program; however it is unique and groundbreaking in its scale and focus. The corps is the first Americorps program with the mission to improve civic engagement throughout an entire city. At the same time, it is also the first program to focus on several local needs — including **health, education and emergency preparedness**. The ultimate goal for the Civic Corps is to create a model volunteer program to be adopted in cities across the nation.

Having been assigned to the Food Bank For New York City, myself and two other Civic Corps members have been given an incredible opportunity to help work towards the Food Bank's goals. Be it **childhood nutrition, tax assistance** or improving **community kitchens** around the city, we have an opportunity to add our own small contribution to the greater good of New York City, the Food Bank and the Civic Corps.

Stay tuned for more on my role as a Civic Corps member at the Food Bank next month!