

Proposal for PTA Reserve Funds

Duniway Elementary School, Nov, 16th 2009

The **Duniway Green Team** would like to submit a request for \$11,500 to fund an AmeriCorps full time 11-month position for **FY 2010-2011**.

The AmeriCorps Volunteer would provide these benefits:

- Develop a 3-5 year master plan and site inventory, including a masterplan for an outdoor and interactive classroom, a garden/shade tree area, composting, drainage/bio swale areas, covered play area and/or a community kiosk/signage
- Coordinate and implement projects relating to sustainability, waste reduction, effective recycling, and environmental activities
- Work with administrators and teachers to identify curriculum and classroom connections at the elementary school level
- Target areas for waste reduction and energy efficiency at Duniway
- Plan and implement year-round planting harvesting and maintenance for projects such as 2. Grade courtyard garden
- Advocate and provide programs to enhance educational opportunities for children, teachers, and the community
- Research and apply for grant opportunities for potential projects

Considerations:

- The PTA and Duniway Green Team have discussed the possibility of an AmeriCorps volunteer at previous meetings. There has been clear interest among teachers and parents to re-submit this proposal for the PTA surplus. Lindsay Shervey will act as mentor/liaison to the volunteer.
- We advocate for this position in order to promote a living, learning experience involving students in environmental stewardship, healthy eating, service learning, and building community connections. This will add enrichment to all students, as is required when funding projects with PTA funds.

- Americorps has had a well-established presence at other PPS schools for very similar types of successful projects for over 10 years. This project leader would serve as a liaison to all school stakeholders. Therefore staff, administrative and PTA representatives would collectively interview and hire the best qualified candidate.
- Since AmeriCorps is not a staff position, one third of the funds would *not* have to be forfeited to PPS in order to gain a full- time education and outreach position on campus.

AmeriCorps is a federal agency that is like the Peace Corps for the domestic United States - Volunteers work on many different projects including improving literacy, building affordable housing, and environmental projects. The agency provides a means for highly qualified volunteers to put their ideals into action while learning new skills, making new connections, and earning an educational award to apply to existing college loans or to grad school.

The PTA provides a link between parent & teacher communities and enhances communication among all elements of the school system and parents.

This proposal has been endorsed by 2nd grade teachers Lindsay Shervey, who also has agreed to be the staff liaison to the Americorps volunteer, and Julie Aquilizan

Here is what's in it for Duniway:

- 1.) A full time dedicated volunteer will do the “leg work” for creating a sustainable program to ensure our success in making Duniway a dedicated Green School. Building infrastructure, designing systems, generating interest, delivering education can be extremely labor intensive and not too many teachers have the time or resources to take this on. An AC (AmeriCorps) member given the appropriate supervision and resources, would allow us to get our programs off the ground with minimal impact on our existing, hard working staff.
- 2.) It would further cement our schools commitment to community service and environmental sustainability – something parents value in Portland.
- 3.) Once the member has built the foundation of the program, they can, in the year or two following, train our teachers to sustain it. Our teachers/facilities staff will understand what they need to do to keep the program alive with proper guidance from the member. The idea is that if done right, our school wouldn't need to hire a new staff person to sustain the program. Sort of like a Train the Trainer component.
- 4.) Cost savings: It would cost \$11,500 (at most) next year to bring on an AC member, vs. an annual salary for a teacher or coordinator. We would be saving a lot and getting a lot in return.
- 5.) We are investing not only in our school and community, but are also making a profound contribution in the life of a young professional looking to make a difference by serving for a year with AmeriCorps.

Here is a list of some of the PPS partnerships/major accomplishments:

- Madison HS (built a community garden and a school garden)
- Abernethy ES (developed garden, scratch kitchen, and garden based curriculum that is linked to state standards)
- Lewis ES (designed and built a native garden, an outdoor classroom and a few permaculture features - i.e. cobb bench, solar oven)
- Skyline ES (working on a waste reduction program this year)
- Grant, Cleveland, Roosevelt HS (developed service learning programs a few years ago; engaging students in local community service)
- The PPS District office has hosted two AmeriCorps members for the past 6 years. These members go to schools within the PPS district and deliver educational programs on energy conservation (Watt Watchers, Energy Challenge) and resource conservation (Great Locker Cleanout, recycling stations, reusable trays, composting, Green School Certification etc)

Additional questions from the PTA board regarding the AC Proposal:

Q: The "side effects" question was not really addressed. What programs/facilities/indoor or outdoor improvements would be added to the school?

A: We have already applied for and have been granted the Oregon Green School Certificate.

We have received a lot of media attention (Oregonian article/Better Homes and Gardens TV interview) which has been a PTA goal.

Outdoor classrooms could be constructed, permaculture features, native plant/vegetable/demonstration gardens created, curriculum tied to state standards. Energy/waste audits conducted could reduce energy/garbage hauling costs, composting facilities/education, recycling facilities/ education/programs (Great Locker Clean Out) etc.

Q: What type of grant opportunities may be pursued? How?

A: Energy conservation programs/grants (Energy Challenge/Watt Watchers), rain water run-off reduction grants (Watershed grants), recycling, waste reduction grants, AC member would build community support for projects and find volunteers and donations

Example: Current grant opportunity:

Funding for 4th, 5th, and 6th Grade Classrooms to Execute Projects to Benefit the Environment!

- 1. What's available?** Disney Planet Challenge is offering full-funding to the **next 100** hands-on classroom project(s) we receive that aim to benefit the environment!
- 2. Who qualifies?** If you are a full-time 4th, 5th, or 6th grade teacher at a public school you can qualify for this funding!
- 3. How do I participate?** First, log in to your teacher account on [DonorsChoose.org](https://www.donorschoose.org) (if you don't have one, any public school teacher can sign up at www.donorschoose.org/teacher). Once you're logged in, submit a hands-on project request focused on benefiting the **environment** (projects on water conservation, recycling, restoring/creating community gardens, etc.) for \$650 in materials or less.
- 4. Then what happens?** Within a week of project approval, if your projects meets the above criteria, you will see a Disney Planet Challenge logo on your project page. **The next 100 projects submitted for this offer will receive full-funding, to be applied by December 18th!**

Q: Where will the volunteer be located (physical office space) and who is responsible for providing office equipment, supplies and furniture?

A: Ideally they have their own space, but understanding the nature of schools, this may pose a challenge. So shared space in schools is acceptable, as long as it's somewhat distraction-free. Possibly the nurses room, which already has a desk, chair and phone, is close to Ms. Shervey's class and the nurse is only present once a week? A shared office with faculty? We need to provide their own computer, phone, internet/server access, storage, and access to office equipment that staff/faculty has (i.e. printer, copier, fax etc) so they can conduct research and develop materials/curriculum. The teacher liaison would be responsible to make sure the AC member knows where and how to get supplies, copies, etc.

Q: Will the AmeriCorps position be a Duniway school volunteer position or a Duniway PTA position? Are payroll taxes and administrative expenses factored into the \$11,500 request? If not, how will these be paid?

All PPS placements are managed by the District. All expenses as far as payroll and admin are included in the \$11,500 cost. No hidden costs. We can be invoiced all at once, biannually or even quarterly. We set the schedule and get invoiced based on our needs.

Q: What types of additional financial constraints/benefits might arise from this?

A: We may want to earmark some funds for training our AC member, for example classes for school garden creation, grant writing etc., as we are being asked that we offer some kind of professional development opportunity for them. But there are also a lot of cost free training options available. We might need materials, tools, resources for projects or curriculum development. Again, we will try to find grants for these things or possibly donations. We would, however, benefit from funding a second year, to ensure the success of the program that has been created in the first year.

There is also a non financial obligation that all sponsors are contractually required to contribute. It's \$5,000 worth of "In Kind" and is generally in the form of 1.) supervisors time (hourly rate plus benefits) and 2.) the space the member occupies plus all the equipment/services that go towards the members position. We will be trained on how to track and report this, it's really simple. Other than that, NWSA/AmeriCorps provides the initial orientation, ongoing training, payroll stuff (workers comp, member stipend, health benefits) and the education award.

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**Condensed article on PPS and AmeriCorps from the PPS website:
From inside PPS, AmeriCorps members advocate for environment**

It's tough being green. With older — and more — school buildings than anywhere else in the state, Portland Public Schools faces huge environmental challenges: Windows leak heat; water trickles from pipes; and inefficient buildings devour energy, making conservation difficult. Through its AmeriCorps members, the district is fighting back, educating students and staff, carrying out waste audits and leading other projects that have saved PPS tens of thousands of dollars. There's more to come.

For 10 years, PPS has partnered with AmeriCorps, a government program that connects young people and those seeking career changes with one-year positions that focus on making communities safer, cleaner and better-educated.

At PPS, three AmeriCorps members strive to “green” the district, working closely with Nancy Bond, the district’s resource conservation specialist. (Other AmeriCorps members are assigned to specific schools throughout the district, where they work on a variety of tasks.)

These three AmeriCorps members can’t build more efficient schools, or replace the windows — but they can change behavior.

To wit: They collect surplus food from cafeterias and distribute it to those in need; organize students into “power patrols,” who carry out energy audits and make sure computers and lights are shut off; talk with custodians about recycling; replace disposable styrofoam lunch trays with reusable trays and arrange for volunteers to wash them; help obtain Green School certification; and serve as liaisons with local businesses and nonprofits on joint endeavors.

“We get to start and maintain projects that district employees don’t have the time to tackle,” says Cassidy Sullivan, one of the 2007-08 central office AmeriCorps members. Once programs are up and running, they continue through the efforts of PPS staff or future AmeriCorps members.

There are financial benefits. Smart storm-water management practices earn the district \$50,000 annually through the city of Portland’s Clean River Rewards program, for example, and the annual Energy Challenge — a contest among schools to reduce energy usage — has saved “thousands of dollars,” according to Bond. “We get a near-full time employee for a fraction of the cost,” she adds.

“It’s a great deal for everyone,” says Fairhead. “We get a year’s worth of experience in resource conservation and education, and the opportunity to coordinate significant district projects. We’re making a real difference in an area that has a lot of support within the district and community, but can be difficult to fund and staff.”

“Our office loves AmeriCorps members. The energy and fresh ideas they bring into the resource conservation field is incredibly valuable — for us, for Portland, for everybody.”

Nancy Bond-PPS