

Campus Corps Leader Jacob Kilgore Teaches Class on Community Service at DUI Treatment Facility

Montana AmeriCorps Connection, 2/14/12

Not only has Jacob worked to expand and diversify the Campus Corps program at DCC, he has also sought out several new opportunities to utilize his talents and skills in a way that provides valuable services to his local community. Such a commitment is exemplified in his recently established role as a teacher at WATCH East: a residential treatment facility for DUI felons located in Glendive. Specifically, Jacob is teaching a three week Community Service class to residents during which he plans to utilize reflection and discussion in order to facilitate a unique learning experience for the students. He hopes that each student will put this newly gained knowledge into action by becoming civically engaged citizens upon being released from WATCH East. I had the opportunity to interview Jacob about this truly unique experience and here is what he had to say:

How did you come to be involved with the WATCH East Program?

Last year my direct service site was with the Boys & Girls club and I would pass WATCH East on my way to and from volunteering each day, which is how I initially became acquainted with the organization. This year I was approached by the director of extended learning at Dawson about potentially teaching a class there. Later, I got to visit the site with the Student Leadership Glendive group and it was during this experience that it became clear to me that I wanted to be involved with the program.

Is this your first experience working with this population?

Yes, it is.

What have you found to be the most challenging part of the experience so far?

It has honestly been a lot less challenging overall than anticipated, which I accredit to the great group of students with whom I am working. I would say that the most difficult part of this experience would be finding the time to grade papers. Each of my 50 students writes an essay over the weekend and submits it on the following Monday and it has been hard to find time to review and provide feedback to each. I certainly have a new respect for English/Literature teachers; or for any teachers that have to grade papers for that matter!

What has been the most memorable/valuable experience thus far?

That I can genuinely say that my students have by far exceeded all of the expectations that I held for the class. I went into the experience with uncertain, maybe even low expectations of what the class would have to offer and have been shocked by the level of engagement from my students, and by the willingness and eagerness to learn exhibited by each and every one of them. It is evident that they treat this class as an opportunity to better their situation, and are taking full advantage of it as such, rather than viewing it as just another obligation required of them to get through the program. Having facilitated countless reflections in my past experiences, I am proud to say that this is my best experience yet. There is seldom a moment of silence with this group and their willingness to share keeps the class moving. The most impressive part is that rather than each student sharing extraneous thoughts, their contributions build off of each other to further develop ideas.