



VISTA Connection

Welcome July and August VISTAs!

Welcome to the new VISTAs! Thanks for volunteering your time and energy to anti-poverty work in Minnesota.

I want to introduce myself, as editor of the VISTA Connection. My name is Melissa Robshaw, and I am currently the VISTA Leader with the Minnesota Housing Partnership in St. Paul.



Yeah VISTA!

The VISTA Connection exists to provide a format for you to share your successes, frustra-

tions, resources, and talents with each other. The Connection cannot exist without reader support and submissions, so please- Get Published!

Thank you again for your dedication to your community!

Melissa Robshaw

mrobshaw@mhponline.org

Post-Graduate Opportunities for VISTAs

Marquette University Trinity Fellows Program offers unique opportunity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Americorps Volunteers and alumni are invited to apply for graduate study in the Marquette University Trinity Fellows Program, a twenty-one month study/work program offering Master's degrees in: Business, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Communication, Economics, English, History, International Affairs, Applied Philosophy, Political Science,

Public Service, or Theology.

While engaged in full-time graduate study, Fellows work on substantive projects designed by selected nonprofit organizations in the Milwaukee area. The nonprofit work commitment is 18 hours per week during each academic year and 40 hours per week during the intervening summer.

Each fellowship includes a full-tuition scholarship and a monthly stipend (currently valued at \$1565 per month). Each

student is charged a participation fee of \$1250 per semester. Up to ten fellowship awards will be distributed for the period of August 2006 – May 2008. Applicants must have at least one year of full-time volunteer service.

Application deadline is February 10, 2006. For more information, contact Carole Ferrara at (414) 288-5861 or carole.ferrara@marquette.edu. Visit their website at www.marquette.edu/trinityfellows.

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Locker Project Victory!

By Stephanie Weir

The X-Committee has yet again realized tangible success! Based in St. Paul, the X Committee is a group of people who are experiencing or have once experienced homelessness. For three years now they have defined themselves as of, by, and for the homeless, working to improve conditions and opportunities for the homeless community at large. On August 24th, 2005, the City of St. Paul strengthened its relationship with the X Committee by agreeing to give a \$10,000 grant for the group's current "storage locker project."

The partnership between the City and the group started brewing in early May when Mayor Randy Kelly met with around 50 homeless people at the Listening House drop-in center in St. Paul. Many of the people experiencing homelessness that were present to discuss the struggles they have on a daily basis were X Committee members. Since that time, the City of St. Paul has supported the X Committee and its development, particularly with the storage locker project.

Some may wonder, why focus on building lockers for a population that desperately needs affordable housing? "It's tough if you're trying to look for a job and you don't have a place to store your things," said Sue Sazevich

(quoted in the *Star Tribune*), a founding member of X Committee. "You carry everything with you – your ID, your medications, everything. And the streets are rough enough." In addition, with heightened security in many public places, those experiencing homelessness are facing more discrimination in this regard. Brett Byfield of ACCESS recently told of a man whose dream it was to go to a Vikings game. He was lucky enough to get tickets but denied entry to the game because, like most people living on the streets, he had his backpack with him.

Lockers are not only useful places for belongings when hunting for jobs or looking for housing, but have also given the X Committee a chance to see real results. Those experiencing homelessness not only work to build the lockers, but also take the responsibility to manage them. As a result, a sense of ownership and motivation ensues. Those involved feel like they have given to the community, while at the same time gaining real power over their mostly chaotic lives. This type of empowerment is contagious and people realize that they can make a difference, in one realm or another.

In late August, X Committee members sat in anticipation at City Hall to find that council members of the Housing and Rede-



Do you know how important this can be?

velopment Authority unanimously approved the proposal for continuation money for the project. Previously, 50 lockers were built in Midway, with another 10 at The Family Place. The group now has the resources to build up to 250 more in various locations around St. Paul.

The next step: finding locker locations! It has proven extremely difficult to find places that will allow lockers to be built on their premises. The X Committee is currently focusing on service providers and area churches, places that already have social service programs in place. Joe Collins of the Department of Planning and Economic Development, along with Tom Triplett, the Mayor's Senior Policy Advisor, have been helping in this process and continue to support the group. Though progress has been gradual, the group has been moving forward. Look forward to seeing good things coming out of the X Committee.

Stephanie Weir is a VISTA with the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless in Minneapolis, MN

My VISTA Experience

By Pilar Rick

We are given a pencil, a desk, a chair, and a computer and they tell us, "Now go create a masterpiece." "Here is my black and white vision for you, but it is up to you to color it and make it yours."

Like an artist I paint the picture of the work plan. Some days I paint with bright hues and intricate detail, but other

days I paint just dots, a lot of dots.

Today I thought my picture was finished, but I looked down and my



brush was dry, the water was clear, and the pallet was white.

Tomorrow I will start again painting the big masterpiece patiently with a pencil, a desk, a chair and a computer, making a difference with each stroke of the brush.

Pilar Rick is a Vista member with Semcac Community Development in Rushford, MN.

Don't Read This Article

By Amy Johnson

Want to do something good for your community, environment, and pocket-book? I would suggest looking-up a little place called North Country Co-op (NCC). NCC is located in the heart of the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis (this is University of Minnesota West Bank territory).

Community-You would be supporting community because North Country Co-op has been providing the

neighborhood with wholesome food at reasonable prices since 1971. NCC is a community of people, both members and workers, who value democracy and actively work together for a better world.

Environment: We carry conventional and organic products and accentuate the importance of organic production and consumption. We work with a network of organizations to bring you the products of the fair trade movement. NCC is committed to pur-

chasing locally and educating on the importance of locally produced food. We advocate for and inform people on related policy issues and local/global happenings. We are very keen on the word of the future- sustainability.

You: This is yet another part that makes North Country special. You can volunteer at North County and receive a discount on anything that you buy in the store.

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Amy Johnson is a VISTA with the Early Childhood Research and Training Center in Minneapolis, MN



Country Mouse Goes to the City

By Briana Frenzel

The Twin Cities are big. That's my impression anyway. I'm from northern Minnesota, and I have recently learned that it is also called Greater Minnesota here in the south. I get a big kick out of that.

Anyway, my hometown has a population of about 650. Now, this is not the first time I've left it, I have had the travel bug for as long as I can remember. I've been to 27 of the states, five foreign countries (seven if you count airports) and served as an AmeriCorps State member in Texas last year. I served in Bryan/College Station, home of the Fightin' Texas Aggies, which has a population of about 130,000. I thought that was big, too. So I may be a hick from the sticks, but I'm not green.

Some things just don't make sense to me though. How come it is so expensive to move into an apartment? It's not so hard to pay rent, but to have the money saved up to move in is rough. And why should I have to pay as much for an apartment with mold as one without? How do such great old brownstones get so dilapidated? Is there a law that says if you buy a house you intend to rent out, you have to be able to afford to keep it up? There should be.

Grocery stores!



How do people sleep at night knowing that they charge more for foods that keep people healthy (meaning alive longer so they can buy more) than foods that everyone knows keep you down? Me, I love junk food as much as the next person, but I feel like I eat it all of the time because it's all I can afford. Organic foods, now that's another story. They charge more for the word on the label, but they're hardly even regulated. I know that there are a lot of vegetarians in the VISTA world, so I would like to pose a question. What do they mean when they say 'vegetarian eggs'?

Metro transit, that's an idea I love. Personally, I like to drive simply because it's the only time I feel like I am in control. I decide where I'm going and the route I will take to get there. But the bus, what a great way to meet people! Plus, you get to live somewhere without worrying about where your car is parked, how much they are charging you, or

where it was towed. Great stuff, that mass transportation.

Here is a topic that everyone has a side on. Light vs. Dark. We've established that I am from the country, so I know I like to sleep in the dark. As in pitch black. That's not possible in the city. Some of the city folks I know say they don't like how it gets so dark in the country, when you can't see your hand in front of your face. They're not comfortable with that. Personally, I'm not that comfortable with shadows. That's creepy, trying to sleep knowing that when you open your eyes you're going to see movement in the room.

Those are just a few of my impressions on city life. So far I'm doing fine with the differences, and I learned a long time ago that no matter where you go, people are the same everywhere. As my dad always said, "we all put our pants on one leg at a time."

Briana Frenzel is the VISTA Leader with Habitat for Humanity Minnesota in Minneapolis, MN

NCCC and Habitat Partner in Albert Lea, MN

By Hugh Alverson

We started a new home in Albert Lea, MN in June of this year. In looking for volunteers, I was in touch with a group of Americorps* NCCC from the Denver campus. After getting all the necessary paperwork and plans submitted, we were fortunate enough to get a group of twelve Americorps members to work for three weeks from June 13th to July 5th. What a blessing! These great young people put in many long, hot hours during the summer. Starting from the foundation, they went all the way to the roof and some of the interior walls in just three weeks!

The leader of the group was Tina Kein from Duluth with the rest basically from the East coast. One of R.S.V.P. volunteers was gracious enough to supply them a two bedroom, very large apartment, free of charge for the three weeks. It was equipped with a

bathroom, kitchen, T.V., stereo, and other amenities.



All was not work. One of our other volunteers let them use their kayaks anytime they wanted, as there are five lakes in the Albert Lea area. The local water park donated passes for the group to use while they were here. One really neat thing was when another volunteer donated the use of a passenger van that the group used to go to the cities one Saturday. They went to the Mall of America and a Twins game. They also got a free ride on an excursion boat on one of lakes and free pizza during the cruise.

The group was fed their noon meals by

different local churches everyday, so they had good, home cooked food. On the weekends, they had gift certificates from various restaurants in the area.

Our site supervisor said, "They're like tigers, I can't keep up with the speed and enthusiasm of these guys." The group also had time to help in Austin during some rain days to renovate a house we were working on, along with some work around our warehouse.

If we could, we would do this again, as they were wonderful and really helped our affiliate to stay on our timetable to finish this year.



*Hugh Alverson is a
2nd year VISTA
member with
Freeborn/Mower
Habitat for
Humanity in Austin*

Roommate Wanted!

One bedroom (semi-furnished or not) is available in a nice two bedroom apartment in South Minneapolis. Rent is inexpensive (less than \$200/mo, includes all,) but I seek a roommate who can care

for my 2 year old son perhaps two hours/week (as your schedule permits).

Seeking female, approx. 22-28, with healthy lifestyle. This can be short-

term (one month) or longer-term (through next June), ideal for someone new to the Twin Cities who has yet to establish where they want to live. Please call 612.822.2479 for further information.

Musical Comments and Illuminations

By Sir Joseph of Altendahl

I should start my first syndicated music column by saying that as a self-proclaimed music snob, I am forced to pass judgments on every musical group, issue, or tour. Though sometimes off-base and sans evidence, I vehemently stand behind all opinions and claims. All concerns can be aired by emailing joseph.altendahl@co.hennepin.mn.us.

LCD Soundsystem (10/19 @ First Avenue, Minneapolis)

Upon a quick listen to this New York-based dance punk (or funk punk) group, you would not believe that it is all created by one man, the legendary James Murphy, cofounder of the Indie label Death From Above Records (The Rapture, and opens The Juan Maclean). He and the touring band are out promoting his newest effort, a self-titled double disc featuring such incredible songs as "Daft Punk is Playing at my House," a concept song about a young boy who saves up \$40,000 over seven years and fifteen days to bring Daft Punk over for a live show in his basement (next to the washing machine).

So what can you expect at an LCD show? Well, bring your dancing shoes and a hipster's attitude as you will surely need both. The doors to

First Avenue's Main Room open at 8:00 for this show. Bring 18 bucks or buy a ticket prior to show for \$15.

Broken Social Scene (10/29 @ First Avenue, Minneapolis)

In conjunction with the release of their new album, the 10 to 15 person super group (depending on the day) of Broken Social Scene will be visiting First Ave's Mainroom on 10/29. Their experimental pop tunes (oxymoron???) are masterpieces and have won over nearly everyone who has taken a listen. In fact, I had their sophomore release *You Forgot It In People* in my car for so long that people began to question my sanity. I told them the cd player was broken and I couldn't get it out.

Anyway, BSS is embarking on a short U.S. tour, which promises to be interesting as they have openly expressed their dislike of touring, calling it an "archaic" practice that interrupts their writing process. If nothing else, it will be an incredible feat to see 10+ musicians packed onto the mainroom's stage (I have my tickets). Singer/songwriter (and BSS guest star) Leslie Feist will open the show.

Atmosphere (11/14 & 11/15 @ First Avenue, Minneapolis)

Who is Atmosphere? I



Sir Joe Himself

believe this is where the rhetorical question of "have you been living under a rock" could be inserted. Atmosphere, or Slug and Ant, or Sean Daley and Anthony Davis, are arguably Minnesota's biggest musical contribution to the outside world since Lifter Puller in the mid-1990s.

Though they have toured frequently throughout the past years, this will mark the first time that Ant (studio producer/turntablist) will be on board replacing longtime touring DJ Mr. Dibbs of 1200 Hobos. Also, to add some depth, Slug has also recently begun the show into two sets, the first half with a DJ and the second with a live backing band (a la Heiruspeks) to mellow out the more emoish crowd-pleasers such as "Woman with the tattooed hands."

Rhymesayers labelmates P.O.S. and Blueprint will open the show. Buy tickets early kitties, this is Minnesota's indie royalty.

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Sir Joseph is the VISTA Leader with Hennepin County Office of Multicultural Services in Minneapolis, MN

Don't Read This Article (Continued from p. 3)

Visit
www.coopdirectory.org
 to find a co-op near
 you!

Encounter excellent people, drink some coffee, find out about community happenings, and stock fair-trade bananas from Ecuador (all the while feeling good knowing the farmers who produced those bananas are receiving a living wage).

It goes like this: stop in or call to sign-up for an orientation. The meeting is 1.5 hours. You will learn about the store, the policies, volunteer opportunities, and the volunteer breakdown, an example being: A household of 1: if you volunteer 3 hours

every two weeks you receive an eight percent discount; 4.5 hrs every two weeks you receive 11 percent; six hours every two weeks you receive 15 percent off.

Get on your bike and come and visit us (sustainability remember, but we do have a free parking lot). We'll provide a lovely seating area for you to enjoy lunch from our deli area. Eat a local sandwich from the Hard Times Café, and soup from St. Martin's Table. Oh, there are also groceries.

North Country Coop

1929 South Fifth Street
 Minneapolis, MN 55404
 (612) 338-3110

Visit our website for more information on mentioned topics:

www.northcountrycoop.com

For more information on the history of co-op movement in Minneapolis read: *Storefront Revolution*; Craig Cox; 1994; Rutgers University Press.

For further questions and/or comments feel free to email me at:

amy4444hope@yahoo.com

Musical Comments and Illuminations (Continued from p. 6)

Other Notable Shows

10/21 - The Decemberists (First Avenue Mainroom)

10/21 - Superhopper (The Turf Club) HECK YES!!!!!!!!!!!!



Don't just sit there— get your tickets!

10/22 - The Warlocks (The 400 Bar)

10/22 - American Analog Set (The Varsity Theater)

10/27 - Calla (Seventh Street Entry)

10/29 - My Morning Jacket (The Quest)

10/30 - The Hold Steady (First Avenue Mainroom)

11/4 - Bear vs. Shark (The Ascot Room)

11/5 - GWAR!!!!!!!! (The Quest)

Local Music Resources

How Was the Show (www.howwastheshow.com)

-Find reviews of numerous shows by both local and mainstream bands that hit the Metro area.

Radio K (www.radiok.org)

-All the Independent music you could possibly handle. Listen online and win tickets for shows.

They also have the most comprehensive concert calendar in the Twin Cities.



The VISTA Connection exists to provide a format for Minnesota VISTAs to share your successes, frustrations, resources, and talents with each other. The Connection cannot exist without reader support and submissions, so please– Get Published!

To submit an article, essay, short story, event review, poem, or anything else you can think of, e-mail Melissa Robshaw at mrobshaw@mhponline.org.

Obligatory Recipe: Turkish Red Lentils and Rice



Red lentils are a great source of protein– and they're cheap too!

Ingredients:

1 Tbs. olive oil
1 large onion; finely chopped
1 carrot, chopped
1 celery stalk; chopped
1 green bell pepper; seeded and diced
1 garlic clove; minced
4 c water
2 bouillon cubes
1 1/2 c red lentils; sorted and rinsed
1 can diced tomatoes
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
1 Tbl paprika
1 bay leaf
salt and pepper to taste

1 1/2 cups dry rice

Directions:

In a medium saucepan, bring three cups of water to a boil. Add rice. Reduce heat to low, partially cover and simmer for about 15 minutes or until all water is absorbed and rice is tender.

While rice is cooking, heat oil in a large stock pot. Add onion, celery, carrot, and green pepper and cook five to ten minutes, or until vegetables

are slightly tender. Add garlic and cook, stirring, about one minute more.

Add water, bouillon cubes, tomatoes, and lentils. Bring to a boil.

Stir in cayenne pepper, paprika, bay leaf, salt and pepper and stir well. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 20 minutes, or until lentils are tender. Add more water to achieve desired consistency.

Remove and discard bay leaf, and serve hot over rice.