

Using Community Members to Strengthen Orientation

*Caitlin Brooking, Hands On Gulf Coast AmeriCorps*State (Biloxi, MS)*

Caitlin: We've found that the Members really enjoy having community members come in, and, we've also...whether that be host-site supervisors, local nonprofits, other AmeriCorps members, or some of the residents that we've served in our community. I think that's been the most powerful orientation piece is having the residents come in and talk to the Members because it really, I mean obviously it creates an immediate connection with the community, and the Members know that when they go out into the field, they'll have somebody who knows who they are, and you know, could kind of help guide them through the community. It allows our residents to participate in our orientation, and it really gives them a stake in our program. But it also helps the Members see why all the different training aspects and all the different parts of our program are important, not just to them but to the community members. So having them speak on, you know, how Members serve as leaders in the community or how they're effective communicators really gives our new Members goals to strive for, and they can see why those skills are important.