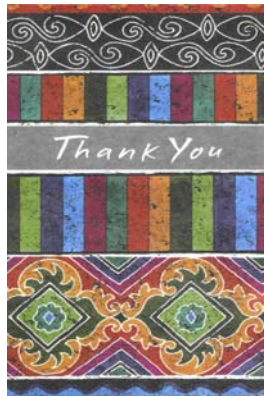


Matt Koppes—AmeriCorps Fall 2002
Jefferson Jr. High School

I wasn't really sure what I was getting myself into when I decided to commit to service with AmeriCorps. I went into the placement with the attitude that I was going to tutor a few kids and be finished with my 450 hours in no time. I thought that it would be a relatively easy "job" and an opportunity to make some easy money for school. Then I realized that it was going to be a real challenge, and although it was, I wouldn't trade the experience for anything in the world.

After a few weeks I sometimes wondered how teachers could actually handle kids everyday and not get burnt out quickly. It was hard to really figure out how to help the kids and to get through to them that I was a volunteer and that they could ask me for help if they needed it. I realized that in order to help the kids I would have to get to know them and have a common understanding with them. I became someone who would listen to them, help them with their schoolwork, and in return for the attention and caring, they began to respect me and others as well.



I received many smiles from students, but this Thank-You card signed by the students in one of the classes I worked with on a continual basis is a keep sake.

I also helped to motivate the kids to do their schoolwork by simply caring if they did it or not. My attention to their work made them push themselves to do it. My goal for the study group was to improve their grades and motivate them by constantly complementing them and telling them not to give up on themselves because I was there to back them up. When I left they said that they would fail because I wasn't there to help them but they knew they could do it on their own and didn't need me.

My term of service was a time I'll never forget. I'm glad I stuck with it. I feel I've grown as a person. I am definitely a more patient person. I just hope I made a little bit of difference in the kids' lives.



Being an AmeriCorps Member provides you an opportunity to be involved in Community Events. For Make a Difference Day, we provided a skit and activities involving drug awareness.