

## Anne Kluesner- AmeriCorps Summer 2002 Fulton Playground

AmeriCorps was exactly the organization I was looking for. I began my experience at Kennedy school, working through the Y care program during the school year. When the summer began, I jumped at the opportunity to do a variety of things and I was placed at Fulton playground in the evenings. I did several different things throughout the summer, but it was my Fulton placement that had the biggest impact on my life. I soon became enlightened as to what my role was in the lives of these children and how important just our presence at Fulton was to the kids.

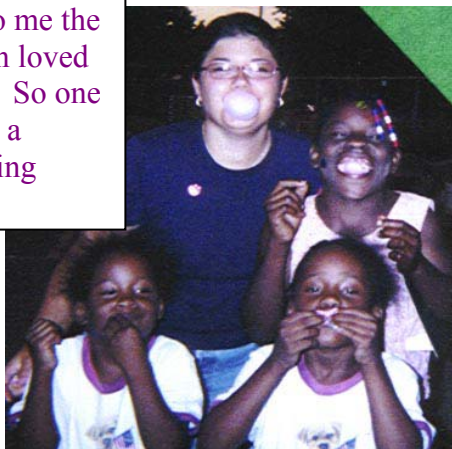
I don't think these kids were used to being asked how their day was or what they liked to do during the summer. It was also very important that we were there. Just being a presence was beginning to impact the kids lives. If one of us was off for the evening or it was a holiday and none of us was there, they knew it and they asked where we were.



The Fulton playground equipment was a popular attraction. We all enjoyed playing follow-the-leader.

When people begin working with the population of children that we worked with at the playgrounds, they think they are going to save them, but it is not that simple. You really can't save them, especially because there is usually more to save them from than what is visible to us. Our role is to be there and to be a positive force in their lives. Ask the children questions, give them positive encouragement, and let them know that they are worth it. We may not be able to save them from their families, their neighbors, or whoever may be a negative impact, but we can save them from themselves and we can give them the confidence and reassurance that they can do anything and that there are people who believe in them.

It occurred to me the kids at Fulton loved bubble gum. So one night we had a bubble-blowing contest.



The kid's favorite game to play was UNO!

